

Inspection of an outstanding school: Bleasdale School

27 Emesgate Lane, Silverdale, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 0RG

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The vast majority of pupils who attend Bleasdale School are non-verbal and have complex needs. Parents and carers have the upmost faith and trust in the staff. They know their children are well cared for, cherished and valued and that they are safe and happy in school. Parents described the school as one big happy family. They could not speak highly enough about the school and the pride they have in their child's achievements.

Staff have high expectations for every pupil. They work in partnership with parents to understand the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of each pupil. They know what makes pupils smile and what activities will engage their interest and curiosity to help them learn.

Staff have the expertise to support pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They ensure that pupils are comfortable, relaxed and settled in school. They use a range of equipment to allow pupils to change position or move around the classroom.

There have been a number of ambulant pupils with complex needs who have recently joined the school. Staff are not as confident or experienced in knowing how to manage the needs of these pupils or to support their communication. They have not been quick enough to intervene to ensure that the sensory, emotional and cognitive needs of the pupils are met. This has led to some poor behaviour in school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have designed a curriculum to meet the complex needs of the pupils in school. They have thought carefully about what pupils should know, while also considering the individual education, health and care (EHC) plan targets for each pupil.

In some areas of the curriculum, pupils achieve highly. Pupils' physical development is a real strength of the school. Rebound therapy and the use of the hydrotherapy pool contribute well to pupils' physical development. Staff have strong subject knowledge and support pupils' physical movement using a wide range of equipment to develop posture and strengthen muscles. Staff also work with specialists including occupational therapists and nurses to ensure that pupils' medical and physical needs are met.

There are some experienced and skilled staff who are confident in using sign, visual aids and technology. They also think about their own vocabulary and how this reinforces the key language that they want pupils to learn, such as 'now' and 'next'. However, this good practice is not consistent across all areas of the school. Overall, the curriculum to develop pupils' communication is not implemented consistently well. This is because some new staff have not had the training that they need to use the communication resources well.

Leaders have introduced a new assessment system that is assisting staff to respond and adapt their teaching to ensure that pupils progress well through the curriculum.

Stories come to life in the sensory room. Expert musicians play the harp or the cello to represent animals and story characters. Pupils can follow birds flying around the room and feel wind on their face. Staff use imaginative resources to engage pupils in stories, poems, song and music. Pupils from local primary schools visit the school each week. They all enjoy reading stories and learning together.

Positive handling plans are in place for all pupils. These work well for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. However, there is some low-level disruption as staff have not intervened quick enough to support pupils with sensory and emotional needs.

The work to support pupils' personal development is very strong. Students in the sixth form develop independence skills through working in the school café. They use their visual aids to ask members of the public what they would like to eat and drink. They serve customers, wash up and collect money.

Pupils develop their social skills through the many joint activities with local mainstream schools. For example, a joint coronation party with their mainstream peers was enjoyed by all. Staff recognise and celebrate pupils' small achievements. For example, when a pupil says 'good' to acknowledge another pupil's work, staff place an object on the celebration tree.

Staff said their workload and well-being has improved under the new school leadership. They are positive and supportive of the changes that leaders have introduced.

There has been some staff turbulence over the last few years. However, governors have worked diligently to ensure that the school has the expertise to care and educate all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are highly vigilant and alert to any sign that may indicate a cause for concern. They are particularly secure in their knowledge around pupils who are non-verbal. Staff know each pupil so well that they are quick to notice any tiny change in each pupil's behaviour or appearance. Staff have thorough training to be able to respond to pupils' physical and medical needs.

Leaders work closely with external agencies, including the local authority, to support pupils and their families.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum to develop pupils' communication is not implemented consistently well across the school. This is because new members of staff do not have the knowledge to deliver the communication curriculum well. This means that some pupils are not supported to use the signs, symbols or technology they need to communicate their needs and opinions. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills they need to deliver the communication curriculum as intended.
- Staff have not had the training that they need to manage the behaviour of ambulant pupils with complex needs. This has resulted in some low-level disruption to learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the training they need to enable them to support pupils' sensory, emotional and cognitive needs.

Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in April 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	119861
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10241824
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	3
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rosemary Dyson
Headteacher	Sefton Booth
Website	www.bleasdaleschool.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has taken up post since the previous inspection.
- At the time of this inspection, the youngest children were in the Reception class.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school caters for a range of needs including severe learning difficulty and profound and multiple learning difficulty.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, listened to the student council meeting and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and pupils' wider development. They also spoke with leaders and staff about safeguarding, behaviour and personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with a group of parents and took account of the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Holmes

Ofsted Inspector

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