

Inspection of Bolton by Bowland Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Gisburn Road, Bolton-by-Bowland, Clitheroe, Lancashire BB7 4NP

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being a member of this village school. They said that the school's small size helps them to form strong bonds with other pupils of all ages. Pupils' positive relationships are clear to see. For example, older pupils provide caring support to the younger ones at lunchtime. They gladly pour drinks out for them or help to cut up their food if they are struggling. The school is a warm and caring place to be.

Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility at the school. They take on different leadership roles around the school, such as playleaders, librarians and well-being warriors. They carry out these responsibilities with pride.

Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. Leaders have high expectations for what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) should learn in subjects such as reading and mathematics. However, leaders are still in the process of creating a well-designed curriculum in other subjects. This includes the curriculum in the early years. This limits how well pupils achieve.

Pupils told inspectors that they particularly enjoy attending an annual agricultural show towards the end of each school year. They were also keen to share about their participation in recent sporting and mathematics competitions.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has experienced instability in leadership. This has hampered some of the school's work to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. As a result, the school is still developing its curriculum thinking in a number of subjects beyond reading and mathematics. This is also the case in parts of the early years curriculum. In a few of these areas, the school is still developing the further curriculum expertise that it needs to lead this work effectively.

The school has outlined a broad curriculum. It has specified the themes that pupils will learn each term. In several subjects, the school has identified the small steps of knowledge that pupils should learn. However, in other subjects, the school has not sufficiently broken down curriculum content into a logical order so that pupils can build their knowledge securely over time. In addition, the school has not considered how to then adapt the delivery of this content to meet pupils' different needs. This leads to pupils, including those in the early years, learning through activities that are not tailored to their different ages and stage of development. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

In some subjects, the school carries out effective checks to identify how well pupils are doing in their learning. However, because the school is still finalising what pupils should learn in other subjects, the school is unable to carry out these checks with the same precision to know what pupils have learned. This limits the school's ability to support pupils with their knowledge gaps and misconceptions.

Pupils enjoy reading. Many read often. The school places a high priority on the importance of learning to read. It makes sure that children begin learning phonics as soon as they start in the Reception Year. Children read books that are well suited to their current knowledge of sounds. The school has catch-up support in place for when pupils need it. However, pupils typically keep up with the phonics curriculum. Therefore, they quickly learn to read with confidence, fluency and expression. This includes pupils with SEND.

The school has appropriate systems in place to identify pupils who may have SEND early. It enlists external agencies where necessary to secure specialist support for these pupils.

The school caters for pupils' personal development. Pupils develop a secure knowledge of physical health and how this benefits their mental well-being. They learn about some of the ways in which people are different from each other. Pupils are taught how to maintain healthy relationships. They know how to stay safe online. Pupils regularly engage in community events linked to the local church.

Pupils value their education. They are eager to contribute during lessons. They are attentive and focus well when working independently. Pupils get along harmoniously during social times and breaktimes. They rarely experience any fallings out.

Governors understand their duties and carry them out effectively. They have a fair understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. They seek external support where it is needed to help them in their role.

The school takes practical steps to help staff to manage their workload. For example, staff spoke positively about the changes made to the school marking policy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school is still working to clarify what pupils, including children in the early years, should learn in some subjects. They are also considering how the curriculum content should be taught to pupils of different ages and stages of development. This sometimes means that pupils do not build their knowledge in a coherent way. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking and provide staff with clear guidance on how to deliver new learning effectively.
- In some subjects, the school does not gather assessment information effectively to establish what pupils know. This is because the school has not identified the specific knowledge that pupils need to learn in these subjects. The school is

therefore not clear on the gaps or misconceptions that pupils might have. The school should ensure that effective assessment practices are in place in all subjects.

- The school has not ensured that some subjects are designed and overseen with the necessary levels of knowledge and expertise. As a result, some subjects are not currently being developed well enough. In turn, it is not clear to staff what knowledge they should teach nor how best to teach it. The school should make sure that those with responsibility for curriculum design are equipped to do this work well.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	119688
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10255950
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jeanne Bishop
Headteacher	Joanne Abram
Website	www.bolton-by-bowland.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 February 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. This person has been in post since September 2023.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in January 2017.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club. The governors oversee these clubs.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the second routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors. Inspectors also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tanya Hughes

Ofsted Inspector

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