Inspection of a good school: The Primrose Centre

Throne Road, Rowley Regis, West Midlands B65 9JP

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

Outcome

The Primrose Centre continues to be a good school.

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Primrose Centre changes lives for the better. Pupils often arrive with challenging behaviour and negative feelings about school. Many leave as calm and focused learners with a thirst for knowledge. Parents told inspectors that taking their child to Primrose was the best decision they ever made. Headteachers who work with Primrose believe it makes 'all the difference' to their pupils.

Pupils learn to manage their behaviour independently. They behave well both in lessons and at breaktimes. Teachers help them to consider the impact of poor behaviour. As a result, on those rare cases when behaviour is not good, pupils calm quickly and return to learning. The school's motto of 'Be Safe, Be Happy and Learn' is the reality for pupils.

Attendance is high because pupils are excited to come to school. They are calm, settled and happy to engage with learning. However, some subjects are not well planned or well delivered. This limits pupils from reaching their full potential. Pupils do not therefore make the same academic strides, including with their reading, as they do with their behaviour.

Leaders take any reported incidents of bullying seriously. If any pupils believe that bullying happens, leaders investigate and act swiftly. Pupils are confident that teachers deal with it well if it happens.

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

Pupils get off to a great start at the Primrose Centre. Leaders work hard to make sure that they have an accurate understanding of pupils' needs and starting points when they start. Regular meetings with the pupil's school ensure that pupils get proper support when they leave Primrose. As a result, most achieve high levels of success in their next school.

Over the last four years, leaders have prioritised finding the best ways to help pupils improve their behaviour. During the inspection, inspectors saw no examples of poor behaviour in lessons. Leaders are also committed to making sure that no pupil falls behind academically. However, while all staff are experts in behaviour management, not all are skilled in delivering high-quality learning experiences.

Leaders have rightly prioritised the development of reading. Recent staff appointments have brought an added enthusiasm for the teaching of phonics. Many pupils who join the centre with poor phonic knowledge quickly begin to get the help they need to catch up. In some cases, teachers read to the pupils and use guided reading sessions to inspire a love of reading. However, not all staff have completed the training they need to become experts in reading. Consequently, the teaching of reading is inconsistent and does not always allow pupils to learn new vocabulary and understand what they have read.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that aims to help the pupils to learn and remember more over time. However, this curriculum is not always taught as well as it could be. In the best cases, learning in lessons such as English and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is linked to what the pupils already know or can remember. For example, pupils use existing writing skills in some English lessons to be creative with 'picture poetry'. However, all lessons are not always planned as well. In these cases, teachers have not assured themselves that pupils have the prior knowledge needed before teaching new knowledge, so learning can be disjointed.

The enrichment curriculum at Primrose is a strength. Outdoor learning, music and dance provide opportunities for pupils to find their talents and ways to express themselves. All pupils attend an impressive range of after-school clubs such as environment club, boxercise, and arts and crafts.

Many pupils start at Primrose with undiagnosed and unmet special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders quickly identify what these needs are and ensure that there are detailed plans to overcome these barriers to learning. Consequently, pupils overcome barriers to learning quickly because they get the right help, and future schools clearly understand what support they will need to provide.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Thought-provoking assemblies encourage the pupils to consider different cultures and the experiences of those who experience racism or bullying. When needed, leaders work closely with services such as the police to support pupils at risk of criminal exploitation.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They feel supported, trusted and valued. They are proud to be members of staff. They think, quite rightly, that the school is well led and well managed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

This is a school where children feel safe and are safe. Staff are well trained, so they know when pupils might be at risk of harm. When needed, staff act quickly to report concerns. Leaders respond appropriately, working with external help when needed. This means that pupils and families get the support they need.

Policies are clear, precise and reflect the needs of the pupils. Governors challenge appropriately to make sure that policies and procedures are understood and implemented well across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of reading is inconsistent. There are some real pockets of strength in phonics teaching, guided reading and the development of a love of reading, but this is not always the case. Leaders need to ensure that all staff understand how the school expects reading to be taught and all have the necessary training to become experts in the teaching of reading.
- Curriculum plans are not always implemented well by all staff. While some staff, most noticeably leaders, have a high level of skill in implementing the curriculum, this is not always the case. Not all staff regularly check on how much pupils have learned, understood or done before teaching new knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that all staff, including support staff, are as skilled in implementing the curriculum as they are in managing behaviour.
- Lessons do not always build precisely on what pupils already know, remember, and can do. In some cases, teachers are skilful in using information about pupils' prior learning to plan highly bespoke learning opportunities for the pupils that build on learning over time. However, this is not always the case. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is always planned well to match the pupils' ability accurately.

Background

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

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2016.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

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	135253
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10199645
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair of governing body	Richard Hipkiss
Headteacher	Kuldip Berdesha
Website	www.primrose.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 – 26 February 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up post in April 2018, followed by a new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher in September 2018.
- There have been several changes to the governing body since 2018.

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During the inspection, inspectors focused on the following subjects: reading, English and PSHE. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, examined teachers' plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.
- Inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders and trustees about safeguarding arrangements. They examined the record of employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records. They also found out about safety procedures and routines.

- Inspectors observed informal times of the day, to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- During the inspection, inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, governors, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with parents, carers, escorts, drivers, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. One inspector spoke to representatives from the local authority, including headteachers of schools that have used the pupil referral unit and local authority officers who have worked with the centre.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Amanda Clugston	Ofsted Inspector

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