

Inspection of Waterloo Primary Academy

Waterloo Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 3AG

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 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

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The head of school is Jenny Brown. This school is part of Zest Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Hamblett, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Philip Thompson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Warm and respectful relationships between staff, pupils and families are at the heart of this welcoming school. Pupils are happy. They benefit from strong pastoral support provided by caring and knowledgeable staff.

Teachers consistently model the positive behaviours and social interactions that they expect from pupils. Pupils move calmly around the building, and they behave politely, for example by holding doors and cheerily greeting any adults that they meet on their way.

The school has recently taken action to address pupils' poor achievement. It has redesigned many areas of the curriculum to raise staff's expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. This has resulted in considerable improvements in the achievement of younger pupils, including children in the early years. However, some older pupils have not benefited from the strengthened curriculum. They do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils readily assume an array of leadership roles. For example, at playtimes, kindness ambassadors lead games and activities to support pupils who might find social times difficult. Pupils who act as members of the school council, and those who are house captains, gather the views of their classmates and present their ideas to improve the school further. This helps pupils to feel part of the wider school community.

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

The school has taken decisive action to improve the quality of education that pupils receive across a range of subjects. Typically, subject curriculums are suitably ambitious for pupils. However, in a few subjects, the curriculum does not mirror the ambition that is seen in the national curriculum. School leaders are in the process of remedying these weaknesses. However, the multi-academy trust (the trust) is not providing enough support to school leaders to improve the quality of the curriculum at the pace required.

The school has thought carefully about what pupils should learn in most subjects, starting in the early years. Most staff design appropriate learning that enables pupils to build their knowledge successfully. This is particularly the case in the early years, where staff have a sharp focus on the knowledge and vocabulary that they want children to develop.

In some subjects, however, some staff do not deliver the curriculum consistently well. This is because, in these subjects, some staff do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' learning. For example, some staff do not select activities that support pupils well enough to extend their prior knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not learn all that they should.

The school recognises that some of its systems to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum are in their infancy. In subjects where the curriculum is delivered less well, some staff do not use assessment strategies successfully to check that pupils' earlier learning is secure. Added to this, due to weaknesses in the previous curriculum, some older pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This hinders these pupils from being fully prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school utilises a range of strategies to identify the additional needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It ensures that all pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, can participate fully in all aspects of school life.

The school has established an effective programme to teach pupils to read confidently. Staff are clear about the sounds that pupils should learn. This helps staff to check whether pupils, including children in the early years, are keeping up with the phonics programme. However, the school does not place equal emphasis on supporting those older pupils who continue to struggle with reading. For instance, the school has not ensured that support for these pupils is sufficiently well-targeted to their specific needs. This slows the rate at which gaps in these pupils' reading knowledge are addressed.

Staff and pupils have a strong and shared understanding of the Waterloo Way, which exemplifies the school's high expectations for pupils' behaviour. This ensures that calm and purposeful behaviour is typical in classrooms from the early years to Year 6.

The school's values of pride, endeavour, equality and respect underpin the programme to enhance pupils' wider personal development. The school equips pupils with a wide range of knowledge that helps to successfully prepare them for life in modern Britain. For instance, it provides opportunities for pupils to broaden their horizons through a range of clubs and trips, and to raise their aspirations through encounters with a variety of employers.

Trustees do not have sufficient oversight of some aspects of the school's work. This hinders them in providing effective support and challenge to the school. Trustees delegate much of their responsibilities to members of the local governing body. Many of these governors are new to the role and lack experience. This prevents those responsible for governance from holding the school to account as effectively as they should.

Leaders proactively seek out, and respond appropriately to, the views of staff. For example, leaders have refined the way that information is collected and reported to parents and carers, to reduce the impact on staff's workload. This has also had a positive impact on staff's well-being. Staff were appreciative of the supportive and collaborative working practices that leaders promote.

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 does not have a sharp enough focus on the development of older pupils' reading expertise. As a result, some older pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge that have not been addressed swiftly enough. The school should ensure that these pupils receive the support that they need to develop into confident and fluent readers.
- From time to time, some teachers do not deliver the curriculum consistently well. They do not have high enough expectations of what pupils should learn in some subjects. This means that sometimes pupils do not learn as deeply as they should. The school should ensure that teachers are well supported to implement the intended curriculum effectively.
- The school is in the early stages of developing suitable assessment strategies that enable teachers to accurately check on pupils' learning. As a result, some older pupils have gaps in their knowledge that remain unaddressed. This sometimes hinders their subsequent learning. The school should ensure that staff are equipped with suitable strategies to identify and remedy gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Trustees, and members of the local governing body, do not have sufficiently robust oversight of the school's work. This hampers their ability to provide effective support for leaders and to hold them to account for the quality of education. Those responsible for governance should ensure that they are well equipped with the necessary information and expertise to fulfil their roles effectively.

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	138300
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10269080
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	594
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Philip Thompson
CEO of the trust	Mark Hamblett
Headteacher	Jenny Brown
Website	waterloo.zestacademytrust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Zest Academy Trust.
- In September 2022, the previous headteacher became full-time CEO of the trust. A new head of school was appointed at this time.
- The school provides childcare in the form of a breakfast and after-school club which is open to all pupils.
- The school does not use alternative provision for any pupils.

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 first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the head of school, and a range of staff. The inspector also spoke with representatives of the trust board and local governing body, including the chair of the trust and the CEO.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority and the school's independent improvement advisor.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, and minutes of trust board and governing body meetings. Inspectors also reviewed records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and social times.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, English, geography, and history. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers and pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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