

Blackpool Gateway Academy

Seymour Road, Blackpool FY1 6JH

Inspection dates

26–27 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders demonstrate the capacity to improve the school. However, standards remain low in reading, writing and mathematics because of weak leadership and management in the past.
- The effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is too variable. Teachers do not match work well enough to the different abilities of pupils.
- The standards achieved by pupils remain low. Despite promising signs, there has not been enough time for leaders' recent actions to undo the damage of previously poor teaching and learning.
- Leaders have redesigned the curriculum so that it is broad and balanced. However, subject leaders do not ensure that subject-specific skills are consistently well taught.
- Expectations for some lower-ability pupils, including many who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are not high enough. These pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Adults in the early years do not consistently ask children questions that ensure they learn more through their activities.

The school has the following strengths

- The positive impact of leaders' actions is evident in pupils' achievements in phonics, the improved progress of disadvantaged pupils and in higher rates of pupils' attendance.
- Higher- and middle-ability pupils typically make secure progress. They read accurately, and the quality of their writing is improving.
- The principal has brought about a shift in the ethos and culture of the school. Both are now more positive and aspirational.
- Trust leaders are addressing the weaknesses in leadership and in teaching and learning that have hampered the school's performance.
- The early years leader has an accurate understanding of the quality of education provided in the Nursery and Reception classes. There is effective support for improving children's language skills in the early years.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good because of the positive relationships that exist in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they raise attainment by improving pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school to make up for previous underachievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - tackling the variability in teaching so that it is consistently good or better across different year groups and subjects by helping teachers to match work more effectively to pupils' needs
 - setting higher aspirations for pupils by providing more challenging work, particularly for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by developing middle leadership to ensure that subject-specific skills are more consistently taught across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early years by developing the skills of adults to talk to children and to question them in ways which help them to learn more.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the school joined the Fylde Coast Academy Trust in September 2016, there has been significant turbulence in staffing. Almost all teaching staff, some of whom are at an early stage in their career, are new to the school. This is partly due to the expansion of the school to include the full primary age range.
- Since her appointment, the acting principal, who became the permanent principal in January 2018, has managed staffing well. She has established a capable leadership team which has changed the culture in the school from one of disaffection to one of positivity. The calm stability that the principal has brought has not only settled staff but has also ensured that pupils have good attitudes towards their work. New pupils are welcomed at the school and soon settle because of leaders' inclusive outlook.
- In response to low standards, trust leaders have tackled the weak leadership and teaching and learning in the school. There are clear signs of improvement. However, the actions taken to improve the school have only recently taken place and pupils are still making up for previous gaps in their learning. For many pupils, standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain too low.
- One notable exception is the attainment of pupils in phonics, which is rising. Leaders have demonstrated the capacity to improve the school by increasing the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of Year 2. This is also having a positive impact on pupils' reading, and middle- and higher-attaining pupils are becoming increasingly effective readers.
- Leaders have also taken positive action to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils, overall attendance and the standard of behaviour. There are also small pockets of improved progress, such as in writing in Year 4.
- Leaders' views of the quality of teaching and learning are sometimes too generous. However, they know what actions need to be taken to improve the school. They know that there is still some way to go to raise pupils' attainment but they have clear plans in place to bring about change.
- Leaders provide significant opportunities for teaching staff to develop their skills. Although the quality of teaching and learning is improving, too much variability remains between different year groups and between different subjects.
- Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to provide pupils with a more balanced education. Although many are new to leadership roles, subject leaders have a clear view of the next steps that they need to take to improve teaching in their subjects. However, there is a lack of consistency in the way in which skills in different subjects are taught.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' behaviour has improved and that their personal development prepares them for life in modern Britain. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective and the development of their social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness is good.

Governance of the school

- Trustees and governors are passionate about improving the life chances of pupils and raising aspirations in the local area. Although they have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, some of the information that they receive reflects an over-generous self-evaluation of the school.
- Governors ensure that the pupil premium funding is targeted well to support disadvantaged pupils. Plans detail clear and specific actions. In 2018, the attainment of these pupils improved on the previous year, although the standards they reached at the end of key stage 1 remained below those of other pupils nationally.
- There is effective support from the trust to help to develop senior leaders' skills. There is an experienced executive principal in place to coach and support the principal as well as a programme of development for senior leaders, many of whom are working towards recognised leadership qualifications.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They describe the need to protect their personal information when on the internet in clear terms due to the effective teaching of online safety. Pupils say that the security of the school site makes them feel safe.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils say that they feel cared for and they feel confident enough to approach staff with any worries that they may have.
- Leaders have ensured that there are clear systems and procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns. Staff receive regular training and updates on safeguarding. There is a culture of vigilance in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers ensure that they compare their assessments of pupils' work with those of other pupils across the trust so that they are accurate. However, these assessments are not used consistently well to inform plans for pupils' next steps in learning. Tasks do not match well enough the different abilities of pupils to challenge them to make the strong progress needed to fill the historical gaps in their learning. Work in pupils' writing, mathematics and science books, and to an even greater degree in their topic books, is not consistently well matched to pupils' needs and so is too hard for some but too easy for others.
- The support for pupils who have fallen behind, especially those who have SEN and/or disabilities, does not set high enough expectations for pupils to make up for lost ground. Improvements to teaching and learning mean that stronger gains in learning for these pupils are now evident, but they require further improvement.
- Teaching and learning are improving. There are now clear routines and structures to support pupils' learning, such as in the targeted phonics groups. There are also some

signs of improvement in pupils' reading. However, there has not been enough time for these promising signs of progress to affect the standards that pupils achieve.

- Inspectors were impressed with pupils' expressive reading and younger pupils' reading skills. However, assessments show that the proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations at the end of key stage 1 is still low. This is because these early developments have not sufficiently improved pupils' reading speed or their comprehension of the texts.
- In mathematics, teachers focus on developing pupils' mathematical language to inform their verbal reasoning and problem-solving skills. For example, in Year 2, the introduction of visual aids to help pupils is starting to develop their thinking. Pupils' books show that, although they can explain their thinking orally, the recording of their thoughts lags behind their verbal reasoning.
- Pupils' written work shows that they do not have sufficient opportunities to practise their skills and that this hinders them from making greater rates of progress. This is particularly evident for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, the development of staff means that pupils are now being provided with clearer models of good writing. This is starting to inform their understanding of what successful writing looks like.
- Senior leaders have ensured that routines and structures are now in place for pupils' learning. For example, there are arrangements to support different groups of pupils in phonics. This has enabled teachers to provide different work for pupils of different abilities and has resulted in improved outcomes by the end of Year 2.
- In science, history and geography, pupils' work shows that opportunities to develop subject-specific skills vary between classes. There is too much emphasis on acquiring facts rather than developing pupils' skills and encouraging them to apply their knowledge. There are signs that, in some classes, pupils have the chance to carry out practical activities in science that are beginning to improve their broader scientific learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. This has a positive effect on the progress that pupils make. The trust that exists between staff and pupils ensures that staff can question pupils to encourage them to reflect more precisely on their own learning without fear of failure. This ensures that pupils are starting to learn from their own mistakes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The inclusive ethos which leaders have established ensures that new pupils settle well into the school. This has been especially important as there has been a large influx of pupils into the school over the last year.

- Pupils are confident in their abilities and are becoming increasingly reflective about their learning. They are guided well by staff to think about how to improve their own and others' work.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and they say that it is rare. They know how to keep themselves safe from bullying and the importance of talking to others to share their concerns. The pupils that inspectors spoke to felt comfortable about approaching adults in the school.
- Pupils also know how to keep themselves healthy through exercise and through having a balanced diet.
- The school successfully promotes the values of the trust. Pupils use these values to inform their everyday actions and relate them well to the British values of tolerance, respect and democracy.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through trips to places of local interest so that they understand their own local heritage and their place in the world.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The pupils that inspectors spoke to say that behaviour in the school is good and that any small incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with effectively by staff. There is clear evidence of pupils' improved behaviour in their positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons and around the school is good. There is no time lost in lessons due to poor behaviour. At playtimes, they enjoy using a range of equipment to keep themselves busy and active.
- Pupils value their education and leaders have made great strides in improving attendance. This is now in line with the national average. There have been significant improvements ensuring that persistent absence is being reduced. Leaders are diligent in making sure that pupils are only taken off the school register when they have moved to a new school.
- The school environment is well organised and has a positive effect on the pride that pupils take in their school. This contributes to the calm atmosphere in the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement. Although most current pupils are making progress in line with the school's age-related expectations in English and mathematics, this progress is not sufficiently strong to swiftly narrow the gaps that exist between their attainment and that of pupils nationally.
- In 2017, results at the end of key stage 1 were weak compared to national averages. Pupils' attainment in reading and writing was below the national average and in the lowest 10% of schools nationally, despite a significant improvement in results in writing. The school's own assessments show that the proportion of pupils currently

working at the expected level at the end of key stage 1 remains below the 2017 national average, but that outcomes in writing are continuing to improve.

- Across the school a high proportion of pupils receive support for SEN and/or disabilities. They typically enter key stage 1 having not achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception. Many are working below, and in many cases significantly below, the level of the early learning goals. This impacts on overall attainment figures. For example, in 2017 two fifths of pupils in Year 2 had SEN and/or disabilities. While their attainment was low overall, the attainment of those pupils who did not have SEN and/or disabilities was broadly in line with similar pupils nationally.
- The progress and attainment in current pupils' books are variable between classes and subjects. This is a reflection of the inconsistency over time that there has been in teaching and learning. However, there are presently signs of improvement in some key areas. For example, the quality of writing in Year 4 is improving. In mathematics, pupils' number work is becoming more fluent, although opportunities for problem-solving and reasoning are still too limited.
- In 2017, only half of the disadvantaged pupils achieved age-related expectations in reading at the end of key stage 1 and only two out of five achieved this standard in writing. Attainment in mathematics was slightly stronger but still well below that of other pupils nationally. Leaders have ensured that this has improved so that currently around two thirds of disadvantaged pupils are achieving these standards as they come to the end of Year 2.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check rose in 2017 to be just below national average. Further improvements can be seen in the phonics attainment of current pupils. The proportion of pupils catching up to achieve the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 2 has improved and is now in line with the 2017 national average.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The early years leader has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of teaching and learning. However, over the last two years, there have been only marginal gains in the outcomes achieved by children at the end of the early years. Attainment by the end of Reception remains below the national average and affects children's readiness to tackle some aspects of the Year 1 curriculum.
- In an attempt to rectify this, the school has extended its provision to establish a Nursery on the school site. However, this has only been in place since January and is yet to have an effect on the standards that children achieve by the end of their time in the early years.
- The quality of teaching in the early years requires improvement to ensure that the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year increases. Interactions with adults do not consistently promote children's progress in less-structured learning activities, for example in the outdoor area.

- The outdoor environment is becoming increasingly established with the addition of more equipment. However, children do not have enough opportunities to extend their written and numerical understanding and skills in the outdoor area.
- Adults plan themes that underpin many of the children's activities. This engages children and enables them to be curious and explore their own learning. The way in which they move between activities and their confidence around adults show that they feel safe and secure.
- Children in the early years behave well. They work well with others and listen to each other's suggestions. Staff ensure that children are encouraged to respect one another.
- Children enter their Reception Year with language skills that are below those typical for their age. Governors have committed resources to tackle this by employing a speech and language therapist to work with staff in this area. This has been effective in improving pupils' communication skills.
- Staff are trained and receive regular updates on safeguarding. They are vigilant and understand the systems and processes that they must follow if they have any concerns. There are no breaches of statutory requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	142175
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10046644

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	324
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Felicity Greeves
Principal	Ms Alicia Gibbons
Telephone number	01253 402936
Website	www.gateway.fcat.org.uk
Email address	admin@gateway.fcat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Blackpool Gateway Primary School opened in September 2013 before converting to academy status in September 2015. The school has been part of the Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT) since September 2016. Blackpool Gateway Academy is one of nine academies in the multi-academy trust.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school and is growing each year as it receives a new intake in Reception. The school currently provides education for 324 pupils from Nursery to Year 4.
- The school's Nursery provision began in January 2018.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average.
- One third of the pupils registered at the school receive support for SEN and/or disabilities, which is well above the national average.

- The school has a lower than average proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The large majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- A significant number of pupils joined the school in the last academic year. In previous years, mobility figures have been broadly average or lower.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class, including making joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors examined a range of pupils' work in mathematics, writing and from across the curriculum.
- Inspectors listened to individual pupils read and heard other pupils read as part of classroom activities.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally in groups and informally around the school.
- Inspectors made observations of pupils' behaviour during lessons, at lunchtimes and when pupils were moving around the school.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 34 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. They also took account of responses from 31 staff who completed the staff survey.
- Meetings were held with trust leaders and governors, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, such as the school's evaluation of its own performance, including its areas for development.
- Inspectors looked at attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation, considered how this related to daily practice, and spoke with staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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