

# Bollin Primary School

Apsley Grove, Bowdon, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 3AH

## Inspection dates

9–10 March 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- This once thriving school is in tatters. Recent events, fuelled by disagreements among staff and parents, have sullied the previously glowing reputation of Bollin in the community.
- Pupils' needs have been relegated amid a raft of parental complaints and staff grievances. Pupils' achievement no longer sits at the heart of the school's work.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders at all levels, including governors, have failed to halt the decline in teaching, pupils' achievement and behaviour.
- Senior and subject leaders have too little influence on the quality of teaching.
- The poorly planned and narrow curriculum prevents pupils from flourishing in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Many parents and teachers have lost trust and confidence in the leadership of the school.
- Assessment procedures serve no purpose. Information about pupils' progress is unreliable and divorced from what is happening in the classrooms.
- A lack of whole-school approaches to teaching and pupils' behaviour explains the wide variation in standards across different classes.
- Teachers do not build on pupils' strong starting points. Low expectations and weak assessment practice mean that pupils, especially the most able, do not make the progress that they should.
- Pupils fail to emerge as talented writers and mathematicians because they have too few opportunities to deepen their learning.
- Pupils' weak attitudes to learning reflect their boredom in many classes.
- Activities in the early years lack purpose and challenge.

### The school has the following strengths

- The interim headteacher is restoring faith quickly among teachers and parents while ensuring that pupils are safe and secure.
- Teaching assistants offer good support to those pupils who have complex learning needs.
- Pupils are charming. They are a credit to their teachers and parents with their warm smiles, good manners and respectful attitudes to others. They present very few barriers to learning to prevent their future success.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress, especially for the most able, so that they build on their positive early skills by:
  - ensuring that they have enough opportunity to put their strong writing skills to greater use to develop their talents, flair and creativity as young writers
  - helping pupils to deepen their understanding of mathematical ideas through problem-solving
  - ensuring that pupils' achievement in subjects such as art, geography and science matches their ability and the expectations for their age
  - tackling pupils' weaker attitudes to learning in some classes, so that they become eager and enthusiastic about their time in school.
- Improve the quality of teaching to eradicate the wide variation between classes, including the early years, by:
  - ensuring that staff understand and follow whole-school approaches to teaching and managing behaviour
  - making sure that teachers take greater notice of what pupils know and can do so they shape teaching to help pupils to make the best progress
  - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities and providing work which challenges pupils to think hard and deepen their learning
  - ensuring that the activities adults provide for children in the early years are purposeful and provide sufficient challenge to promote stronger progress.
- As a matter of urgency, tackle endemic weaknesses in leadership by:
  - mending relationships with parents so they regain confidence and trust in the school's work
  - equipping subject leaders with the skills and confidence to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their area of responsibility
  - reviewing the curriculum to ensure that pupils gain their full entitlement to a broad and balanced diet which prepares them well for the future in subjects other than English and mathematics
  - ensuring that assessment systems link to the curriculum on offer, provide reliable information and support teachers in their planning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- This is a school in turmoil. It is broken. The current atmosphere of discord and mistrust among staff and parents is doing little to build bridges and re-establish Bollin at the heart of the community. Emotions are running high and uncertainties about the future abound. Everyone is operating on a day-to-day basis, greeting pupils with friendly smiles and ensuring that they are safe while in the building. Nevertheless, at this point in time, there is no strategic direction or long-term plan to mend relationships or tackle the considerable weaknesses in teaching.
- Recent events go a long way to explaining the lack of confidence and trust most parents and teachers have in the school's leaders. However, these are not the only reason that Bollin requires special measures. Over time, leaders at all levels, including governors, have failed to halt the decline in teaching and pupils' achievement. Consequently, all aspects of school life have deteriorated since the school was judged outstanding in 2007.
- New leaders identified the need for change at the start of the school year. Nonetheless, leaders' actions have failed to bear fruit. There is no indication that the school is turning a corner. In fact, the opposite is true; the notable strengths identified at the previous inspection continue to diminish in the current climate.
- Many parents and members of staff hold the view that if the school was able to return to the situation prior to September 2016, everything would be resolved. Inspection evidence is at odds with this belief. There are too many systematic failings and endemic weaknesses for such an easy solution to mend the considerable shortcomings in this school.
- Most parents have no confidence in the current leadership. This is evident from their response to Parent View, the letters they sent to inspectors and the views they shared during the inspection. Lack of communication, concerns about temporary teaching and ineffective responses to their complaints underpin their dissatisfaction. In contrast, other parents welcome the air of change brought by the new leadership.
- Staff share the same mixed views about the past few months, which is leading to a divided team and poor staff morale. The pace of change in recent months means that many are unsure about whole-school approaches to teaching. This accounts for the wide variation in pupils' experiences across different subjects.
- Teachers' professional development over time has failed to equip them for recent changes in the education landscape, especially the higher expectations of the new national curriculum.
- Leaders at all levels have made too little difference to the quality of teaching. Middle leaders, across different subjects, are unaware of what is being taught in different year groups or of how well pupils are moving forward from their starting points. New ideas or ways of working are not followed through, or checked with sufficient rigour, to ensure that they are embedded in each year group.
- Assessment systems are weak. A new electronic system means that teachers and leaders can gain information on pupils' achievement at the touch of a button. This

makes little difference, because the information about pupils' progress in this system is flawed and unreliable. An overemphasis on published tests, which do not link to the school's curriculum, has replaced teachers' judgements. Leaders do not check or moderate assessment information to ensure that it is accurate. The vast array of data has no impact in classrooms. Teachers do not use information about pupils' starting points to shape their teaching.

- The new national curriculum, in place for over two years across the country, has only just been introduced at Bollin. Its implementation has not been well planned. Too little thought has been given to breadth and progression. Consequently, pupils' experience of, and opportunity to flourish in, subjects other than English and mathematics are poor.
- Despite the turmoil in the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has not suffered. Frequent trips, visitors to school and special events such as a Mayan workshop and Greek Day all help to bring topics to life and promote pupils' interest. A strong emphasis on different cultures and faiths means that pupils gain an understanding of differences. Anti-bullying activities, electing the school council and charity work underpin pupils' readiness for life in modern Britain.
- The strategy for supporting disadvantaged pupils through the pupil premium funding lacks rigour. It does not go far enough in identifying potential barriers to learning or ensuring that support is focused on individual need. The measures to check success are weak. This group typically makes similar progress to that of other pupils nationally, but this is not always true for the most able disadvantaged.
- Sports funding is used well to develop teachers' skills and to extend the range of physical activity on offer to pupils. Physical education features strongly in school. For example, Year 4 pupils are gaining dancing skills, while older pupils attended a local sporting tournament during the inspection. A good range of extra-curricular activities is on offer to encourage pupils to develop healthy lifestyles.
- No one is aware of how the special educational needs funding has been spent or the impact this has had on pupils' progress. The new special educational needs leader has quickly identified shortcomings in the school's approach to supporting these pupils. She is beginning to make changes for the better.
- The interim headteacher, only in post for one week, has steadied the ship quickly. She is winning over staff, parents and pupils through her calm and warm manner. Her focus on ensuring that pupils are safe and her frequent communication with parents has been effective. However, she is a lone voice at present. She has a clear understanding of the necessary steps required to improve the school, but has neither the time nor the support to implement change.
- The local authority has kept a close watch on the school in recent weeks, taking action to intervene formally when matters began to escalate. The support provided by the local authority adviser has been especially strong in the last few weeks. Her close and diligent presence has helped the school to operate safely on a daily basis.

## **Governance of the school**

- Over time, governance has failed to stem the decline in teaching and pupils' achievement. More recently, governors' ineffective action in responding to staff

grievances and parental complaints has allowed the rumbling unhappiness with the school's leadership to escalate. This has left the school without direction and in a very fragile state.

- Minutes of meetings show that governors did ask pertinent questions about pupils' achievement and the impact of change. However, the constant turnaround in governors last term meant that agreed actions drew to a grinding halt.
- As a result of local authority intervention, the governing body has been disbanded. An interim executive board (IEB) is now in place. Governance has been secured. However, as members of the IEB only took up their new post three days prior to the inspection, they have not yet had the opportunity to demonstrate impact. Members of the IEB are coming to Bollin fresh. They are not responsible for the previous failings in governance.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Permanent staff, including adults who do not work in classrooms, have been trained well to spot signs of potential abuse of pupils. They know what to do in order to raise concerns. Policies are up to date and all staff recruitment checks have been completed. This has been no easy task given the considerable churn in staff recently. Nonetheless, secure systems for ensuring that pupils are taught by safe adults have been followed to the letter.
- The interim headteacher has made safeguarding the number-one priority in her first few days at the school. Appropriate supervision is in place and new staff are well aware of the school's strategies to protect pupils.
- In response to a number of safeguarding concerns raised by parents, local authority officers have completed an audit at the school. As a result, procedures have been tightened to ensure that pupils feel safe and are safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Inadequate

- The rapid decline in teaching since the previous inspection is not purely due to recent events and the considerable instability in staffing. It is a result of low aspirations, poor assessment practices and inadequate challenge over time. Weaknesses in teaching are the root cause of rates of pupils' progress falling over a period of years.
- Pupils' books from the start of the year tell a story of the unequal experiences they gain on a day-to-day basis. Some classes are thriving; others are stuck due to mundane and lacklustre teaching which fails to meet pupils' needs and interests. A lack of whole-school approaches to teaching results in wide variation from class to class. This stops pupils from making the progress they should from their very strong starting points as they move through the school.
- Most teachers pay too little attention to what pupils already know and can do. Consequently, pupils, regardless of their ability, face the same activities, meaning that for some the work is too easy, while others struggle to keep up. There is a lack of urgency in some classrooms as time is wasted during teaching sessions. In others,

teachers' questioning does little to probe or deepen pupils' understanding.

- Teachers put a ceiling on the most able pupils' learning. Despite the obvious capabilities of these pupils, few of the tasks they meet enable them to think hard. They complete work neatly and to a good standard, but for the most part this requires little extra effort.
- The teaching of mathematics has lost its way. Constant change in approaches this term means that the strategies for developing young mathematicians are muddled.
- The emphasis on teaching spelling, grammar and punctuation is at the expense of pupils becoming writers who can communicate lively and interesting work across a range of topics. A lack of progression from one writing activity to the next prevents pupils from building on what they have learned.
- The teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics is poor in many classrooms. Topic books show a lack of coverage, depth and progression. This is reducing pupils' enthusiasm for learning. It is also leaving them without a solid foundation on which to build once they enter their chosen secondary school.
- There are pockets of good practice within the school. In these classrooms, there is a lively buzz as pupils discuss their ideas and set about completing tasks with eagerness. These teachers present creative activities which appeal to pupils' interests. For example, one Year 3 class explored advertisements using technology. This enabled pupils to think about the whole package of graphics, music and words to persuade a buyer to spend their money. As a result, pupils' understanding of persuasive writing was much deeper by the end of the session.
- The quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work in some classes indicate the higher expectations of some teachers. However, this stronger teaching is overshadowed by too many weaknesses elsewhere. This means that pupils are not able to capitalise on the gains they make in one class as they move into another.
- The current situation, with numerous short-term temporary teachers, is doing little to raise the quality of teaching. These new members of staff are doing all they can to form positive and welcoming relationships. This accounts for pupils' continued willingness to come to school. However, they are not able to pitch their teaching to meet pupils' needs due to the weaknesses in assessment information.
- To their credit, teachers have shielded pupils from the upset in school and the community in recent weeks. Almost all staff, including temporary teachers, dressed up to celebrate the belated World Book Day event. This made the event a memorable experience for pupils and signalled a return to normality for all.
- Teaching assistants are making a valuable contribution to the learning experience for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In particular, the support they provide for pupils with the most complex learning difficulties is effective. Close support, nurturing attitudes and good questioning mean that these adults meet the needs of individual pupils well.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Bright, confident and articulate youngsters are eager to talk to visitors, displaying the social and language skills necessary to initiate and maintain a conversation. They work and play together well, listening to their peers and sharing their ideas. Their understanding of differences and the tolerance they show to others mean that classrooms are calm and harmonious.
- Pupils' personal development has not been harmed, despite the considerable turnaround in staff. Pupils' friendly smiles on crossing the threshold are a tell-tale sign that most are happy to come to school. This is not true for all. Year 5 pupils, who have experienced the most disruption, are less enamoured with school life.
- The pupils who chatted to inspectors report that they feel safe and free from harmful name-calling. They are confident that adults will listen to them if they raise any concerns or worries. School records confirm that there have been few instances of bullying over time. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They talk with confidence about how they set about avoiding risk when working online.
- The recently established nurture group is proving to be effective in supporting those pupils who need extra help in forming relationships or settling into school. Productive links with a wide variety of outside agencies means that vulnerable pupils, or those who are going through a difficult time, receive the support they need to make progress.
- There are some opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life, for example as head boy, head girl and classroom monitors. The recent announcement of a vacancy on the school council is the cause of much excitement for younger pupils. Nonetheless, too few pupils have the opportunity to take on responsibilities. Some have been disillusioned. For example, the librarians are at the point of giving up due to the lack of support they receive to do their job well.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' good manners and the respect they show to adults and each other mean that poor behaviour is an exception at Bollin. Nonetheless, in many classes, too few pupils are eager to participate. Instead, they simply choose to opt out, sitting quietly rather than taking an active role in their learning. They are bored and uninspired by the diet they receive, day in and day out. Only in a few classes are pupils fired up and keen to succeed.
- Behaviour around the school is typically calm and safe, especially when supervised. When pupils have more freedom, during play and lunchtimes, their behaviour can sometimes become over-exuberant and noisy. Despite their levels of maturity, some

pupils find managing their own behaviour difficult.

- Pupils have mixed views about behaviour. They agree it is not good because some pupils do not behave as they should and that teachers do not challenge weaker behaviour well enough. It is their view that 'teachers need to calm down' and 'try something different'.
- Along with variation in teaching, there is a lack of consistency in how the school's behaviour policy is followed. Consequently, pupils' behaviour and attitudes do not support successful learning across the school.
- Attendance remains above the national average and few pupils miss chunks of time away from school. Nonetheless, disadvantaged pupils are less inclined than others to be in school regularly.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils arrive at school ready to learn. They present no obvious barriers to learning and have few weaknesses in their skills and knowledge. They are ripe for success. However, too few really get the chance to blossom. They might be ready for the next stage of their education socially, emotionally and academically, but they do not shine, despite their potential to be exceptional learners.
- Pupils consistently attain high standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6. However, this positive headline figure masks the fact that pupils' progress is no better than average and has declined over time.
- Pupils do not make the progress they should considering their starting points, readiness for learning and the support they receive at home. They are capable of so much more. Poor teaching and a lack of ambition holds pupils back.
- Pupils' books and the school's own data indicate that this decline is set to continue for the foreseeable future. Too few pupils are being permitted to capitalise on their strong start. This is especially true for the current Year 3, who made weak progress in writing and mathematics across key stage 1 in 2016, and for the most able pupils.
- Pupils' progress in writing is weakest over time, especially for boys and the most able. Pupils' books reveal the reason. Teachers spend too much time going over spelling, grammar and punctuation exercises, even when it is obvious that many pupils already have a secure grasp of these skills. Pupils are denied the opportunity to write at length frequently enough. This prevents them from putting their strong skills to good use, to develop flair and to gain a writer's voice. Teachers encourage pupils to draft their ideas, but books show that too few pupils can edit their work independently. This means that the 'show-off' pieces of work are no more than a copying exercise.
- Examples of pupils' extended writing show that they have sufficient technical ability, creative acumen and understanding of language to write well. While their work is of a good standard, there is little evidence of progression in most classes. They started as strong writers; they remain so, but too few are excelling. This limits the most able pupils. Boys continue to lag behind. Their lack of enthusiasm for writing means that some are unwilling to put pen to paper.
- Phonics scores have declined over time, although they remain above average. Most

pupils are competent readers who can read for meaning and with expression. However, the most able readers are not sufficiently challenged. Weaknesses in the use of the well-stocked library and a lack of monitoring by teachers mean that these adept readers receive too little guidance when selecting books.

- Pupils' mathematics books reflect the variation in teaching. Some pupils are enjoying a rich mathematics curriculum which encourages them to solve problems. Others plough through similar tasks each day, with little evidence of deeper learning.
- The real weaknesses in pupils' outcomes are in those subjects other than English and mathematics. A considerable number of pupils have not been given the opportunity to acquire age-appropriate skills in art, geography and history. For example, there is no evidence of pupils developing knowledge of different art techniques or working with a range of materials. Geography work barely goes beyond labelling a map. In history, there is too little emphasis on pupils finding out about the past from artefacts. While headline test scores in reading, writing and mathematics may look positive, pupils are not developing as young artists, designers or geographers by the time they leave school.
- Standards in science are also above the national average. However, pupils' progress in this subject is very mixed. For some pupils it is weak. A lack of progression, depth or focus on scientific skills means that some teachers do not develop key concepts adequately. In contrast, other pupils, such as those in Year 4, are supported well to ask questions, test their ideas and draw conclusions so that they can make sense of the world.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to that of others nationally. They reach similar standards in reading, but their attainment is not quite as strong in mathematics. The most able disadvantaged pupils make slower progress in mathematics and writing compared to other pupils in the school and nationally.
- By the time they leave Year 6, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make varied progress. Those pupils with more complex learning needs make strong strides in their learning. The same is not true for other pupils who need extra help with their learning. Current assessment information suggests that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making weak progress. However, this is partly due to deficiencies in the school's testing system. Their books tell a better story, but by no means are they making better than average progress over time.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to others in the school.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- Children enter Nursery ready to learn. Their skills, knowledge and abilities are at least in line with, or above, those expected for their age. They are especially secure in their reading, writing and number skills. Children start school well prepared for future success.
- Despite their readiness for school, the proportion of children gaining a good level of development by the end of Reception is only just above the national average. Too few children exceed the expectations for their age. In the past, children entered Year 1 a considerable distance ahead of other pupils nationally. This advantage has dwindled

over time.

- The time children spend in the early years ensures that they can access the demands of Year 1 with few problems. Nonetheless, it does not help them to build rapidly on their strong start. Progress for children during the early years is steady at best; for some, especially the most able, it is slow. This group start to lose ground from the start.
- Children enjoy their time in the early years. They are resilient youngsters, adapting very well to the new staff in place without fuss or complaint. They abide by routines and show increasing levels of independence as they select activities and complete tasks unaided. Almost all are ready to learn. They are curious and willing to try out new things. They persevere even when they hit difficulties.
- Children mostly behave well, but they need lots of reminders to keep them on track. On occasions they lose concentration when learning opportunities fail to meet their needs and interests. Nonetheless, they respond well to the new adults and are quick to modify their behaviour when asked to do so.
- Small-group teaching sessions support children's learning well. Children are gaining appropriate phonic skills to help them read and the recent focus on writing is reaping rewards. The work on display and in children's books would not look out of place in Year 1. However, the activities children choose for themselves often lack any real purpose because they are not matched to learning needs.
- Assessment information, which is updated frequently, does not have enough bearing on the activities that adults prepare for children. This is especially true for the most able.
- Leaders have secured a bright, welcoming and spacious learning environment. Excellent resources, plus good outdoor space, mean that there are a wealth of opportunities for children to thrive in all areas of learning. All safeguarding and welfare requirements are met to ensure that children are safe, secure and nurtured. Appropriate links with parents ensure a positive partnership between home and school.

## School details

Unique reference number	106296
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10033898

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	459
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Brian Rigby
Headteacher	Michelle Brindle
Telephone number	0161 928 8900
Website	<a href="http://www.bollin-primary.com">www.bollin-primary.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@bollin.trafford.sch.uk">office@bollin.trafford.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	17 July 2007

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the pupil premium spending or the special educational needs and/or disabilities report.
- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Almost two thirds of the pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average.
- The number of pupils who receive support through the pupil premium funding is also below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in key

stage 2.

- There have been a number of changes to leadership roles. The substantive headteacher took up post in September 2016. A deputy headteacher was seconded from another school during this period.
- At the time of the inspection, 15 members of staff were not in school. This includes seven teachers, the substantive headteacher and the substantive deputy headteacher, who has been absent since the autumn term. Classes are being taught by short-term, temporary teachers.
- An interim headteacher took up post six days prior to the inspection.
- Previous governance arrangements were dissolved as a result of local authority intervention. An interim executive board was formed three days prior to the inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 due to serious concerns about a breakdown in leadership. It was deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.
- Inspectors visited most classrooms to observe teaching and pupils' learning.
- They observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play. Inspectors met formally with five groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, staff, middle leaders, members of the interim executive board and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors also met with 75 parents.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of school information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books.
- Inspectors took account of the 201 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. They also considered the 73 letters parents sent to inspectors during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Jo Olsson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sheila Iwaskow	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clare McGarey	Ofsted Inspector
Maria McGarry	Ofsted Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector

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