

Inspection of Essa Primary School

Lever Edge Lane, Bolton, Lancashire BL3 3HH

Inspection dates: 29–30 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive a warm welcome to school. Many of the pupils who join this school are new to the country and speak little English. They settle in quickly, make new friends and enjoy their time at Essa Primary School.

This is a happy and caring school. Pupils told us that they feel safe. Pupils appreciate that adults take the time to check on their well-being each morning. They know that teachers care about them and will listen to any worries they may have. Pupils told us that teachers deal swiftly with any problems, including bullying. Pupils are confident that rare incidents of bullying will stop and will not happen again.

Pupils behave well. They listen attentively during lessons and they follow teachers' instructions carefully. No time is wasted in class. Pupils are eager to live up to the high expectations that staff have of them. Pupils were proud to share with us what they learn at school. They value the wide range of educational visits and meeting visitors that come in to school to deliver presentations on interesting topics. The richness of these experiences allows children to deepen their knowledge and understanding of different cultures as well as develop their English language skills.

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

Leaders have designed a well-planned curriculum in many subjects. This includes mathematics, English and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Leaders have thought carefully about the best order in which to teach different themes within these subjects. Some pupils struggle with mathematics because they have gaps in their learning. This is especially the case for those pupils who join the school mid-year. Leaders work to ensure that these pupils receive help to catch up in mathematics.

Daily reading lessons help pupils to develop their reading. Over time, more and more pupils achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. By the end of Year 2, most have mastered their phonics and can read fluently. Pupils who fall behind with their reading receive the help they need to catch up quickly. Teachers continue to develop pupils' reading skills throughout key stage 2. Older pupils told us that they love to read and spoke about the books they read at home.

Children get off to a flying start in Reception. They achieve very well in the different areas of learning. This is because staff are expert in helping children to develop their speaking and listening skills. Every opportunity is taken to promote children's learning of spoken language through a well-planned curriculum. Children from a wide range of backgrounds play happily together. Everyone is made to feel special. Teachers in the early years have created classrooms brimming with exciting

learning activities. Children had great fun making skeletons out of matchsticks and beads. They were able to use words such as skull and bones when talking about their work.

Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were low in 2019. This is because a large proportion of pupils have not experienced a stable education and therefore do not do well in the tests. Nevertheless, most pupils make good progress in their learning, particularly those who stay at Essa Primary for a long period of time.

In some subjects, such as music and design and technology, the curriculum is less well developed. Leaders already have appropriate plans in place to improve these subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language are supported well. Trustees have employed skilled staff to help these pupils overcome barriers to learning.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about democracy, rights and responsibilities. They debate issues such as homelessness. In assemblies they learn about different religions. Older pupils told us that they wanted to be good role models for the younger children. Pupils are polite, and they respect the differences between themselves and their peers.

Pupils enjoy school. Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average for all schools. A minority of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The school is working hard to address this.

The principal and her new leadership team have worked tirelessly to develop the school. Everyone recognises the improvements that have taken place. There are clear plans to improve the curriculum by developing the skills of subject leaders. Staff value these training opportunities and feel supported with their work–life balance.

Governors, trustees and the chief executive provide good support and ask challenging questions. This ensures that staff and leaders are accountable for improving the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have robust systems in place to check that adults at the school are safe to work with pupils. Staff understand how to keep pupils safe from harm. Staff benefit from regular safeguarding training. They remain vigilant to the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders follow up on any safeguarding concerns quickly. When necessary, staff work effectively with outside agencies to support pupils and their families.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about staying safe online and the dangers of open water. Pupils also learn about road and fire safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have designed a well-planned mathematics curriculum. This is an ambitious curriculum that ensures effective sequencing of learning. Leaders are aware that a small proportion of pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge. This is especially the case for those pupils who join the school partway through the year. Leaders must ensure that these pupils receive appropriate support, so they can catch up quickly in mathematics.
- In some subjects such as design and technology and music, the curriculum is not yet sequenced effectively. This means that some pupils are unable to build on their prior learning in these subjects. Leaders must ensure that learning in these subjects is carefully planned so that teachers deliver content in a logical order. It is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken that they are in the process of bringing this about. The transition arrangements were used on this inspection to confirm that pupils benefit from a good-quality education.
- Some experienced subject leaders have already ensured that the curriculum is carefully sequenced so that pupils can learn and remember more. Some subject leaders are new to their roles. Senior leaders must further develop the skills and expertise of these subject leaders, so they can inform teachers how to sequence learning 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're 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	140973
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10110910
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	378
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Read
Principal	Joanna Atherton
Website	www.essaprimaryacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	13–14 June 2017

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Essa multi-academy trust.
- The school has very high levels of pupil mobility. A high proportion of pupils who attend the school are disadvantaged. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During the inspection, we spoke with the chief executive of the trust, the chair of the trust, senior leaders and subject leaders. We also spoke with teachers, staff and five members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspection focused deeply on reading, mathematics, science, PSHE, and design and technology. We visited lessons, met with subject leaders and pupils, observed pupils reading, met with staff and looked at pupils' work. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.

- We looked at documentation relating to leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning. We considered school attendance and behaviour information.
- We also visited and checked on the quality of education in the early years.
- We looked at safeguarding documentation and met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- We considered the views expressed by parents in the 11 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including three comments received via the free-text facility. We spoke to several parents at the beginning of the school day. We considered 17 responses to a questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

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