

# Inspection of Acorns Primary School

Moor Park, Blackpool Road, Preston, Lancashire PR1 6AU

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Inspection dates:	7 and 8 January 2025
The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Acorns Primary School supports every pupil to shine. Pupils are happy to be part of such a caring and welcoming community. Parents and carers praise the school for its dedication and support.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. The curriculum is broad, exciting and ambitious. Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities, gain a strong understanding of many subjects.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are kind, caring and quick to support their friends. Staff help pupils to grow in confidence and independence. Pupils enjoy their learning and feel motivated every step of the way.

Personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils take part in enriching activities, from educational trips to sports competitions. These experiences help them to grow, learn important life skills and create happy memories. Pupils also learn how to stay safe and care for others.

Staff and pupils share strong bonds. Staff understand each pupil's needs and provide personalised support. Pupils trust staff and feel safe knowing help is always there. By the time they leave, pupils are confident, capable and ready to take their next steps with pride.

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

The school has built a tailored, well-structured curriculum that helps pupils to grow both academically and personally. The curriculum perfectly balances academic learning with emotional, personal and social growth. It is designed to meet each pupil's individual needs, with regular checks to track their progress. These checks make sure that learning paths are just right for each pupil and that they fully understand the material. From the very beginning in the early years, staff deliver content in a clear, logical order, allowing pupils to revisit and practise what they have learned. This boosts pupils' confidence and gives them a strong base from which to tackle new knowledge and skills.

The school delivers a carefully planned phonics programme for pupils who are ready to begin their reading journey. This approach begins in the early years when this is appropriate. Pupils read books that match the sounds they have learned, ensuring every step builds their confidence. Staff frequently check pupils' phonics knowledge, identifying anyone who needs extra support. Those who fall behind receive tailored help through expertly adapted phonics lessons and personalised interventions. This thoughtful and ambitious approach empowers pupils to progress steadily and confidently towards becoming fluent readers.

Staff are experts in supporting pupils with complex needs. For example, the school uses a variety of personalised communication systems, including vocal cues, advanced technology and voice output aids. The school is committed to ensuring that every pupil's

voice is heard. Staff are greatly familiar with each pupil's communication style, offering the support they need to succeed in their learning.

Pupils thrive because they are supported to manage their own emotions and stay fully engaged. Routines are practised from the early years onwards. The school is a calm, sensory-friendly space, filled with positivity that encourages learning. On the rare occasion when a pupil feels overwhelmed, staff respond with compassion and expertise, offering the perfect support to help them feel at ease again. The school analyses pupils' attendance. It works successfully with families, pupils and other agencies to support those who struggle to come to school regularly.

The school puts personal development at the centre of everything it does. This shines through in every aspect of school life, from exciting lessons to enriching activities. Pupils explore and celebrate a variety of religious and cultural traditions, building a deep understanding of their identity and values. This equips them brilliantly for life in modern Britain. The school offers countless opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. Pupils enjoy overnight trips, compete in sports events and join the school council. These experiences help pupils to grow in confidence, build character and develop excellent social skills.

Leaders engage with staff at all levels, encouraging open communication and providing strong support. They listen to feedback, carefully consider workloads when making decisions and ensure that staff receive continuous training. As a result, staff feel valued and well supported, particularly in terms of their well-being.

Governors clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. They provide valuable support and hold leaders accountable for the school's success. Governors make sure that the school stays true to its vision, meets legal requirements, uses resources wisely and keeps a strong focus on safeguarding.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135347
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10337683
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	92
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Amanda Howarth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paula Barlow
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.acorns.lancs.sch.uk">www.acorns.lancs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	1 and 2 November 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with visual impairment; hearing impairment; speech, language and communication needs; autism; multi-sensory impairment; moderate learning difficulties; severe learning difficulties; and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school offers provision for children from the age of two years old.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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 met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and a range of staff. Inspectors met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and early reading, physical development and understanding the world. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils’ work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects. An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, they spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses, and the results of the online staff surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Gary Anders

Ofsted Inspector

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