

Inspection of Co-op Academy Portland

Laird Street, Claughton, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 0AB

Inspection dates:	23 and 24 April 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The head of school is Shaun Leathers. This school is part of the Co-operative Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Chris Tomlinson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Russell Gill. There is also an executive headteacher, Katy Bergman, who is responsible for this school and two others within the trust.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this welcoming school. They benefit from the many opportunities that they receive. Pupils appreciate being part of an inclusive community where they can be themselves. They feel well cared for and safe. Pupils know that staff will help them if they have any worries.

The school expects all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. The school and the trust have taken effective action to ensure that these expectations are realised. For example, the school's clear focus on developing the right curriculum means that pupils currently at the school are achieving much better than they did in the past. Most pupils build their knowledge well from their starting points.

The school ensures that children in the early years learn to behave well. This sets a solid foundation that is built on successfully as pupils progress from year to year. In classrooms, pupils are engaged, motivated and committed to their education.

Pupils enjoy participating in a range of extra-curricular activities that have been carefully selected. They live out the school's values through activities such as visiting the local residential home to read stories with the older generation and doing litter picks on the beach. Pupils enjoy the responsibility that comes with being part of the school parliament and eco-group. They carry out their roles with pride and maturity.

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

The school's curriculum builds pupils' knowledge and skills so that they are prepared for future success. However, the effectiveness of this curriculum is not reflected in the 2024 published data. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below the national average. This was due to a higher-than-average proportion of pupils leaving or joining the school during the school year. In addition, the previous curriculums did not help pupils to learn as well as they should.

The school has reflected deeply on the 2024 outcomes and has made swift and effective changes to strengthen the curriculum further. It has taken steps to ensure that teachers know exactly what they should teach and how they should deliver subject content. Lessons engage pupils and motivate them to learn effectively. The work that pupils complete helps them to meet the curriculum's goals. Pupils express their learning with enthusiasm and confidence. This begins in the early years. During the inspection, children showed great excitement when learning about castles. Children in the early years now gain a solid foundation on which to build as they move into key stage 1 and beyond.

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils learn to read. Language and communication are prioritised right from the start when children join the early years. A love of reading is tangible across the school, with many pupils enjoying spending time in the school library. The school's approach to teaching early reading is effective. Pupils understand how to blend sounds together to read simple words. Pupils who need

additional practice are given timely support to help them keep up with the phonics programme. They read books that match their stage of reading. This helps them to become confident and fluent readers.

Mostly, teachers check pupils' understanding and help them to resolve any misconceptions. However, this approach is not consistent throughout the school. From time to time, in some subjects, including mathematics, pupils do not make strong connections between their current and previous learning. In these areas, pupils do not build their knowledge of the curriculum as well as they could.

Pupils write widely and often across the curriculum. The school supports pupils to build their understanding of vocabulary. However, some pupils do not get all the support that they need to build their handwriting and spelling skills as well as they should. They have not grasped the basics of writing before tackling more challenging written tasks. As a result, these pupils struggle to complete some of their written tasks with accuracy and success.

The additional needs of pupils, including those pupils with SEND, are identified quickly. These pupils get the support that they need to be successful in school. The school works in partnership with a range of external agencies to make sure that pupils are helped to access all that the school has to offer.

Most pupils are courteous and respectful. Typically, they behave well across the school. The school has worked effectively to improve pupils' attendance. Staff 'sell' each school day so that pupils do not want to miss out. Strong relationships are built between staff and pupils. Dedicated support means that vulnerable pupils and their families receive extensive help. Parents and carers praised the school's community hub, which provides a lifeline for many.

The school places pupils' wider development at the heart of everything that it does. Pupils develop compassion and respect for others. Theatre visits, museum trips, choir and sports opportunities provide pupils with enriching experiences that broaden their cultural understanding. Community safety is promoted through engaging stories and informative workshops. Pupils consistently benefit from this excellent work. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff value the training opportunities and other support that the school and trust leaders provide. Those responsible for governance carry out their statutory duties well. They use their expertise to aid the school's continuous improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, assessment strategies are not used well enough to check that pupils have remembered the knowledge they have been taught previously. This hinders teachers from deciding on the next steps in learning. As a result, some pupils do not build their knowledge well enough over time. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment techniques effectively so that gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and addressed.
- Some pupils do not gain a secure grasp of basic writing skills, such as transcription, spelling and punctuation. This makes it difficult for them to succeed when they complete written tasks. The school should ensure that teachers enable pupils to gain the basic skills that they need to write fluently and successfully.

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	144632
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10378021
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Russell Gill
CEO of the trust	Chris Tomlinson
Headteacher	Shaun Leathers (head of school) Katy Bergman (executive headteacher)
Website	www.portland.coopacademies.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 February 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new head of school and deputy headteacher have been appointed. There is also an executive headteacher.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- This school uses one registered alternative provision for its pupils.

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 the ongoing impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, science and history. They met with subject leaders and with teachers. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning.
- The inspectors observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects. They met with leaders, spoke with pupils and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- 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.
- The inspectors spoke with members of the local governing body and the trust. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Helen Friend, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris McDonald

Ofsted Inspector

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