

Bowling Park Primary School



Principal, Stuart Herrington, dons his 'Maths Magician' outfit for the monthly mental maths competition



Creepy crawlies: Year 4 get stuck into pond dipping whilst on a residential trip to Nell Bank

Bowling Park is 'totally bonkers, but totally brilliant'; that was the verdict of one recent visitor to our school. We think this sums up Bowling Park pretty well! Our school is a large, three-form entry school in the heart of Bradford, with two sites that are one mile apart. We have a wonderfully diverse population of children which is made up of around 50% Pakistani children with the remaining 50% being made up of Gypsy Roma, Eastern European and British children.

REPORT CARD

- » Name of school: Bowling Park Primary School
- » Principal: Mr. Stuart Herrington
- » Location: West Bowling, Bradford
- » Diverse population of Pakistani, Gypsy Roma, Eastern European and British children
- » Number of pupils: 695
- » Number of staff: 125
- » Number of pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium benefit: 276
- » Number of pupils who speak English as an additional language: 557

The community around the school has a high rate of mobility and, as a result, for the past eight years we have seen up to 80 new pupils each year in addition to our normal Nursery and Reception intake. The majority of these children arrive with little or no experience of English, and often little experience of school. Our local area is also within the top 10% most deprived areas in the country (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2015). Many of our children have tough backgrounds, where life expectations and achievement are low.

We have faced many challenges, but have approached them all with a consistent vision and good humour. It is this mix that has helped us to develop, and has led to a successful and happy school filled with children and staff who genuinely love to be here.

All our hard work has certainly paid off, as our progress figures have been above the national average for the past three years. In our 2013 Ofsted, one of the key 'Areas for Improvement' was maths, and by 2016 our progress was in the top 8% of schools in the country.

It has been a long journey for Bowling Park. We began life as two completely separate schools, both of which were struggling due to low attendance, achievement and staff morale.

Usher Street Primary had been in Special Measures for nearly six years, meaning that they had continuously fallen below acceptable standards. It was eventually closed following a succession of acting Headteachers, and re-opened in 2008 alongside the original Bowling Park School, with Stuart Herrington as the new Principal of both sites.

Since 2008, we have worked tirelessly to make improvements. This included a revitalisation of teachers, as we resolved to fill the school with people who bought into our vision and were dedicated to turning the school around. As a result, children at Bowling Park are now positive and ready to learn, and staff are equally enthused. This was reflected in our Ofsted inspection (February 2013), which judged all aspects of school to be Good. 'You, your leadership team and governors are unwavering in your determination to ensure that every child is nurtured, cared for and inspired to learn. This is the mission and driving force of the school.' (Ofsted report, April 2017)

Our real challenge was to create a joint ethos which would help the organisation feel as 'one'. The two sites both have classes from Nursery to Year 6, so it is important that everything is shared; from the teachers' planning of lessons to the delivery of morning assemblies. Every child is given the same opportunities despite being geographically so far apart.

Our shared ethos was achieved through the creation of our 'going the extra mile' motto (GEM). This promotes high expectations and encourages children to do the best they can. We now have two GEM days per year, where children learn about the different routes to careers, and many of them dream of becoming engineers, paramedics and lawyers. They understand the impact of school on their future lives, both in secondary school and beyond to adulthood, and the skills and qualities they will need to get there. The impact of this can be seen in our most recent Ofsted inspection, 'Together, you have all been successful in enabling pupils to overcome barriers to learning. You have raised their aspirations and improved their life chances.' (Ofsted report, April 2017)

Encouraging children to strive for the best underpins our curriculum. We make sure that each day brings new skills, challenges and opportunities.

“Children learn about the different routes to careers, and many of them dream of becoming engineers, paramedics and lawyers”

Land ahoy! Year 6 explore the wonders of Lake Windermere on their residential trip



'Doctors' from Year 3 discover what jobs they could do as adults





Our budding scientists uncover new skills in the laboratory

“Staff feel confident in their abilities and comfortable approaching each other for help”

It is our intention to provide a rich and varied education to foster ‘successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens’; our vision for all children. Residential expeditions – for example, a week in the Lake District – play a big part in this, as many children have not experienced the wider world around them. Years 4, 5 and 6 attend overnight trips around the country, which increases independence and knowledge. We heavily subsidise the cost of these trips to make them accessible to everyone. This focus on developing the ‘whole child’ means that ‘Pupils are very happy in school. They show respect for one another, work hard and are well behaved.’ (Ofsted report, April 2017)

Our success could not have been achieved without the dedication and development of our committed staff. Our Governing Body believe in ‘growing our own’ teachers and leaders. We employ graduates as teaching assistants, many of whom go on to train and then teach with us. Most of the leadership team have moved up through the ranks, bringing their knowledge and shared vision with them. This means that staff feel confident in their abilities and comfortable approaching each other for help. The dedication of our team was highlighted in our recent Local Authority review; ‘The shared vision and commitment from all staff at both sites is second to none and worthy of dissemination to others within the education community’ (B11,

December 2016). Staff regularly take part in developmental book scrutinies and work moderations, where teachers analyse and compare the strengths of children’s work alongside those from other schools.

In response to the new National Curriculum, we hired a ‘Scientist in Residence’ to raise the profile of science in school. We also installed a state-of-the-art laboratory and a wildlife area. This means that children access new skills, which opens up further career pathways and options, as well as creating learners who are inquisitive and keen to discover new things.

Last year we were chosen to become a ‘New to English Centre of Good Practice’. This allows us to share ideas and methods with schools across Bradford. We work hard to help our large percentage of ‘New to English’ children catch up with their peers through dedicated English sessions. The success of this programme means that these children make consistently rapid progress and settle into school quickly.

We are immensely proud of the growth we have seen at Bowling Park. However, we know that there is still room for improvement. Our attainment is low in comparison with other schools, especially in reading. As a result, we are developing a reading framework that helps to promote higher-level comprehension. Initiatives such as our Bedtime Stories event at the National Media Museum inspire a love of books which positively impacts on children’s reading ability.

We are about to join a Multi Academy Trust. This leap into new territory will allow us to continue school improvement and further develop teacher training.

Whatever is on the horizon for Bowling Park, we will face it with the same dedication and humour that we have always done. We aim to continue to be ‘totally bonkers, but totally brilliant’.