

Inspection of a good school: Great Marsden St John's Primary School A Church of England Academy

Trent Road, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 0NX

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 January 2024

Outcome

Great Marsden St John's Primary School A Church of England Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Michaela Underwood. This school is part of Cidari Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Peter Ashworth, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John McClelland.

What is it like to attend this school?

This academy is a happy and welcoming community. Staff have high expectations for the achievement of all pupils. They foster a warm, supportive atmosphere in classrooms, which gives pupils the confidence to try their best and be unafraid of making mistakes. Pupils make strong progress through the curriculum and typically achieve well.

The school helps pupils to build strong relationships and to feel part of the school community. For example, children in the early years are buddied with Year 6 pupils who act as mentors. At lunchtime, the 'family dining' approach has pupils sitting in mixed year groups, with the older pupils setting the table and modelling the behaviour expectations for the younger pupils. Pupils uphold the school ethos by behaving well and treating one another with kindness and respect.

Pupils benefit from a wide variety of activities that promote and enhance their physical fitness. At lunchtime, sport leaders run games that get pupils moving and develop their collaborative skills. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to participate in clubs that deliberately promote more unusual sports such as curling, archery and laser-tag. Other opportunities include the school choir, which is open to all pupils who enjoy singing.

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

The school has equipped its staff with a strong level of expertise in how to promote pupils' learning. This has enabled leaders to design an ambitious and effective curriculum

that allows pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to develop a broad and rich body of knowledge. The school has carefully structured the curriculum so that pupils' learning builds on what they have learned in the past. Staff in the early years prioritise the knowledge that is most important to prepare children for key stage 1.

Teachers benefit from training that develops their knowledge and expertise in each subject. The school ensures that high-quality resources are available to teachers when designing and delivering lessons. This has a positive impact in reducing teachers' workload, as well as enhancing pupils' learning. In most subjects, teachers carefully check on pupils' knowledge. They ensure that any misconceptions are quickly identified and addressed. However, in some subjects, the school is in the early stages of developing suitable systems to check on pupils' learning over time. This means that staff are sometimes unaware of gaps in pupils' knowledge that hamper their ability to take in new learning.

The school strongly promotes the importance of reading from the start of the Reception year. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of texts, both through the taught curriculum and during their independent reading time. Parents and carers are invited to attend regular 'stay and read' sessions to share and enjoy books with pupils. Most pupils in the early stages of reading quickly develop the knowledge that they need to become confident and fluent readers. Staff are typically well trained to develop pupils' knowledge of phonics. They ensure that pupils have suitable books to practise their reading regularly.

Parents value the strong pastoral care provided by the school. Because staff know pupils and families well, they swiftly spot any problems or difficulties that pupils may be facing. In the early years, staff quickly form strong relationships with children, helping them to feel comfortable and confident in the school environment. Staff are well trained to identify signs which may indicate that a pupil has SEND. The school has strong systems in place to support these pupils, and those who speak English as an additional language. This helps these pupils to progress successfully through the curriculum.

Improving pupils' attendance is a high priority for school leaders, who are taking suitable action to tackle pupils' absence. The school systematically identifies and addresses barriers to pupils' attendance, seeking support from external agencies where necessary. These actions have resulted in some improvements in pupils' attendance.

Staff use a common approach to promote the positive behaviour that they expect from pupils. Pupils understand the importance of behaving well so that everyone is able to learn. They know that if their behaviour does not meet the expected standard, staff will help them to behave better.

The school has designed a programme that effectively supports pupils' wider development. For example, pupils learn about the various religious and cultural groups found within the school and local area. They gain respect and appreciation for other people's beliefs through visiting a variety of local places of worship. Pupils are respectful of difference and do not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

Trustees and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school, as well as the areas for development. They use this knowledge to support school leaders to bring about improvements to the academy that benefit pupils and staff.

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, the school is in the early stages of designing methods for teachers to check how much pupils know and remember. As a result, teachers may not have recognised that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This is hindering pupils' learning. The school should ensure that teachers know how best to identify and fill gaps in learning in all subjects, giving pupils a secure base of knowledge to build on.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2018.

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	141981
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10291435
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John McClelland
CEO of the trust	Peter Ashworth
Headteacher	Michaela Underwood
Website	www.stjohnsnelson.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Cidari Multi Academy Trust.
- The school is a Church of England school and is part of the Diocese of Blackburn. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in June 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of 2025.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with senior leaders, including the headteacher, and a range of staff. The inspector also spoke with representatives of the local governing committee and the trust board, including the chair of governors and the chair of the trust.
- The inspector met with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. The inspector also reviewed records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and social times.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers and pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Charlotte Oles, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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