

Inspection of a good school: St Clare's RC Primary School

Victoria Avenue, Blackley, Manchester M9 0RR

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 April 2024

Outcome

St Clare's RC Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this school. They settle remarkably quickly, as soon as they start in the early years. Pupils are happy and enjoy attending school.

The school is ambitious for pupils, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. During lessons, pupils are highly focused on their learning, and they do their best to work hard. Pupils achieve well and engage fully in what the school offers.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Classrooms are typically hives of activity. Pupils' behaviour around school and at social times demonstrates the values of the school. They are polite, behave sensibly and show kindness and respect towards their peers and to staff.

Pupils take full advantage of the extra-curricular activities available. These include choir, athletics and chess. Pupils can also learn to play musical instruments, including the violin and drums. Children in the early years relish seeing animals from a visiting farm and watching chicks hatch. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to their school. For example, 'Mini Clare's' have helped to transform the school's prayer garden.

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

Pupils benefit from a broad and interesting curriculum. The school has taken care to design a curriculum that incorporates the knowledge, skills and experiences that pupils should benefit from. From the start of the early years and onwards, careful thought has been given to what pupils are taught and the order in which they should build their knowledge. This helps to ensure that pupils secure important foundations.

Across key stages, teachers deliver the curriculum well. In the early years, children benefit from language-rich activities. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to design activities that help pupils to learn subject content well. Pupils are given ample

opportunities to regularly recap their prior learning. This helps them to tackle more complex ideas later on. However, in a small number of subjects, the assessment methods that staff use to check what pupils know do not cover the specific knowledge that pupils have been taught. This prevents teachers from identifying precisely, and building on, what pupils know and remember.

Reading is a priority across the school. Staff have received comprehensive training, and they teach the school's phonics programme with precision. Children at the early stages of learning to read quickly learn letters and the sounds that these represent. Pupils enjoy reading books that are matched accurately to the sounds that they already know. Pupils who need extra support with their reading are quickly identified and receive help to catch up quickly. Reading is well resourced. For example, the new library in key stage 1 helps younger pupils to develop good reading habits. Older pupils spoke enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors.

The school is quick to identify when pupils need extra support. Teachers use up-to-date information on the learning needs of individual pupils to successfully adapt their delivery of the curriculum. This helps pupils with SEND to access the same learning opportunities as their peers and to take part in all the school has to offer. They achieve well.

The school has a clear behaviour policy that staff follow consistently well. This means that pupils know what is expected of them. At social times, pupils enjoy the range of activities on offer to them in the playground. Rates of attendance are positive. There are effective systems in place to ensure that pupils come to school regularly and on time.

The school provides a breadth of experiences to support pupils' wider development. School trips, including to science and history museums, build pupils' cultural understanding, as well as enhance their learning in the classroom. Additionally, pupils learn how to look after their physical and mental health. Organised activities, such as multi-faith week, help pupils to develop a respect for other cultures and celebrate difference. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including understanding the risks associated with knife crime.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They said that they are well supported to manage their workload and that they enjoy opportunities to develop their expertise. Governors have the necessary skills and commitment to undertake their roles well. They play an active role in continuing to support the school to develop all aspects of its provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers' checks on learning do not cover the precise content that has been taught. This prevents them from identifying accurately, and

building on, what pupils know and remember. The school should ensure that assessment strategies are more precise so that teachers can build more effectively on pupils' prior learning and help them to know and remember more.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2014.

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	105554
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10321280
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gerard Collins
Headteacher	Colette Howe
Website	www.st-clares.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This Catholic school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in February 2024. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of 2032.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and with other leaders and members of staff. She held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also spoke with representatives of the diocese and of the local authority.

- The inspector spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. The inspector also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and 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 carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed samples of documentation relating to pupils with SEND.
- The inspector reviewed the curriculum in some other subjects and reviewed samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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