

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Darkinson Lane, Lea Town, Preston, Lancashire PR4 0RJ

Inspection date:

3 December 2024

Outcome

St Mary's Catholic Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils strive to live up to the school value of treating others with respect. The positive relationships that they have with one another and with staff help pupils to feel happy and safe at school.

Children in the Reception Year quickly learn to follow the school rules and the class routines. Across the school, pupils behave well and learning is rarely interrupted. Those pupils who need extra help in managing their emotions are supported well by nurturing staff.

The school has high expectations for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils embrace the opportunities that the school provides for them. They are keen to learn and many pupils achieve well during their time at the school.

Pupils benefit from a range of experiences that contribute to their wider development. These include experiences that develop their moral and social understanding. Activities such as fundraising for local charities and lighting a candle to reflect on those in need contribute towards this. Furthermore, pupils learn about responsibility in a variety of ways. For example, Year 6 pupils are buddies to the Reception Year children. Other pupils contribute to the life of the school through being members of the school council.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious for pupils, including those with SEND. Across much of the curriculum, the school has set out the important knowledge that pupils should learn from the Reception Year through to Year 6. This takes account of the mixed-age classes.

Typically, teachers use the curriculum information to craft learning activities that help pupils build on what they already know. The school has supported teachers to do this effectively, through training and development opportunities. In reading, writing and mathematics, teachers carefully check pupils' understanding to identify and address any gaps in knowledge.

Pupils with SEND benefit from well-chosen resources that help them to access the same curriculum as their peers. These include tactile objects that aid their understanding of mathematical, as well as support from adults. The school has in place effective systems to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Parents and carers of pupils with SEND value the support that the school provides for them. Across many subjects, pupils, including those with SEND, are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Within the school's curriculum, there remain one or two subjects where the key content that pupils should learn is not clear. This makes it difficult for teachers to know what knowledge to prioritise when designing lessons. As a result, some pupils experience learning that does not connect with and build on what they already know. Consequently, their knowledge in these subjects is insecure.

In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is relatively new. In these subjects, the curriculum is well thought out. However, as a result of weaknesses in the previous subject curriculum, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge that have not been identified and addressed. This limits the depth of knowledge that some pupils have.

The school places a high priority on ensuring that pupils become fluent readers by the time they leave Year 2. Effective approaches to the teaching of phonics help pupils to become confident readers. The school ensures that the books pupils read closely match their phonics knowledge. This allows pupils to experience the pleasure that comes from reading a book.

Pupils understand that there are many different types of families in society. They learn about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils experience activities in school that bring British values to life in an age-appropriate way. For example, pupils learn about democracy by voting for their school council members. The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors support and challenge the school well. They have a sharp focus on the quality of education. Governors work effectively with the school to realise the agreed values. This has made a positive contribution to maintaining the standards identified at the previous inspection. Staff value the way in which the school works with them to minimise unnecessary workload and the investment made in developing their expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In one or two subjects, the school has not set out precisely what key knowledge it wants pupils to learn. This hinders teachers from designing learning that helps pupils to build up a deep body of knowledge. The school should ensure that it finalises its curriculum thinking so that it is clear what pupils should learn and when this knowledge should be taught.
- In a small number of subjects, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge as a result of weaknesses in the previous curriculum. Some of these gaps have not been identified or addressed. This limits the depth of knowledge that some pupils have. The school should ensure that teachers are equipped to identify and swiftly remedy these gaps in pupils' knowledge. This is so that pupils can build and further strengthen their knowledge in these subjects.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in June 2015.

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

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| Unique reference number | 119634 |
| Local authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 10348196 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 108 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | John Cliffe |
| Headteacher | Arran Brogden |
| Website | www.lea-st-marys.lancs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic primary school in the Diocese of Lancaster. The previous section 48 inspection took place in November 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of 2029.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The governing body operates a breakfast club and after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The inspectors spoke with some parents and carers. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Robinson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alison Dickinson

Ofsted Inspector

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