

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Catholic Primary School

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

Inspection dates:

6 November 2019

Outcome

St Mary's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend St Mary's. They enjoy their learning because lessons are varied and interesting. Pupils use the school's 'E.A.T.' approach to learning. This means that they can explore, be active and think creatively in lessons.

The pupils whom we spoke with told us that there is very little bullying and name-calling in their school. They say that everyone gets along well together. If they do not, teachers are always there to help them sort out their differences quickly. Lessons are rarely disrupted by pupils' behaviour.

The school has a strong culture of respect and serving others. The school council leads a number of activities that encourage all pupils to take part in school and community events.

Pupils really value the wide range of clubs and activities on offer in school. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in many activities after school. These include dance, science, hockey and judo clubs.

Pupils feel safe in school. They say that adults look after them well. They know that there is someone to talk to if they are worried. Older pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and when using social media. This is supported in school by lessons about cyber safety.

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

The associate headteacher and other leaders provide positive direction for the school. They understand what the school does well and what needs to be improved.

Leaders have a clear vision and ambition for the curriculum. They have worked hard over the last year with staff, parents, carers and governors to redesign the curriculum. This is so that pupils can study a full range of subjects in a more logical way. However, this work

is relatively recent. As a result, it is not possible to see the impact of these changes in some subjects. Some subjects have not previously been taught in enough depth to ensure that pupils know more and remember more. For example, pupils are knowledgeable about what they have learned in geography this term. However, they are less confident when discussing previous learning in geography.

The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. Leaders promote a love of reading and pupils achieve well. Teachers make sure that pupils receive high-quality phonics teaching from the start of Reception. If anyone begins to fall behind, teachers act swiftly to help them catch up. Older pupils are confident readers and they read with fluency and expression. Pupils are able to talk confidently about books and authors they have enjoyed.

In 2019, pupils achieved well in the key stage 2 national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils did not achieve well in mathematics in 2018. Leaders acted quickly to address this. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the changes in their mathematics lessons. They develop skills and knowledge to solve problems and can describe how they arrive at an answer. Pupils' learning in mathematics is now taught in a logical order. Work is clearly matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, pupils' achievement improved in this subject in 2019.

Governors work very effectively for the school. They visit the school often and take part in many school activities. Leaders provide governors with detailed reports about the school. However, governors do not always ask challenging questions, which would allow them to have a deeper understanding of the school's effectiveness.

The vast majority of parents are extremely happy with the school. They value the welcoming atmosphere and feel that their children are safe. A comment from one parent typifies the views of others, 'The school really does feel like an extended family.'

Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce workload. Teachers say there have been positive changes. Leaders always take the well-being of staff into consideration.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding has a high priority. Staff are well trained and receive regular updates. They know what to do and who to talk to if they are worried about a child. Leaders, including governors, ensure that the systems for recruiting new staff are robust. All the appropriate checks are carried out on staff.

Leaders work closely with a wide range of professionals to make sure that vulnerable families get the help and support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have worked hard to redesign the school's curriculum. The changes that leaders have made in English and mathematics have begun to bear fruit. Pupils are able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of their learning. In other subjects, such as geography, there has not been sufficient time to embed changes made to the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers continue to teach all subjects with sufficient depth to ensure that pupils know more and remember more. Ofsted's transition arrangements were used in this inspection to confirm that pupils benefit from a good quality of education.
- Governors receive a wide range of information and are knowledgeable about the work of the school. However, governors should ensure that they ask challenging and timely questions so that they gain an even deeper strategic understanding of the school's effectiveness.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 2–3 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	119634
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10087713
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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mr Gerrard Oakes
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Charnley (associate headteacher)
Website	www.lea-st-marys.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 June 2015

Information about this school

- All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- Several staff have joined the school since the previous inspection. At the time of the inspection, an associate headteacher was responsible for the daily running of the school as a temporary arrangement while the substantive headteacher is on leave.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the associate headteacher, the substantive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders, teachers and members of the governing body. We also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- We talked with pupils in meetings and around school. We listened to pupils read.
- We considered 36 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the free-text responses. There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaires.
- We looked at the school's improvement plan and at the minutes of governors' meetings.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about the school. This included information about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff and documents related to support for pupils.
- As part of the inspection, we considered how phonics and reading are taught. We also considered how mathematics and geography are taught. We visited lessons with leaders and looked at pupils' work. We met with some pupils from the lesson visits to discuss their learning. We discussed the curriculum in these subjects with teachers and leaders.

Inspection team

Emma Jackson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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