

Inspection of a good school: St Mary Magdalene's Roman Catholic Primary School, Burnley

Wellfield Drive, Burnley, Lancashire BB12 0JD

Inspection dates:

17–18 September 2019

Outcome

St Mary Magdalene's Roman Catholic Primary School, Burnley continues to be a good school. However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' strong Christian ethos and vision to 'Love one another as I have loved you' are threaded throughout the school.

Pupils told me that they like coming to school. They feel safe and enjoy their learning. They know that their teachers want them to work hard and do well. However, in recent years, leaders have not ensured that all pupils have benefited from a good quality of education.

Pupils feel that behaviour in lessons has improved over time and that teachers deal well with instances of poor behaviour. They told me that bullying is rare. If it did occur, they said that it would be resolved quickly by their teachers.

The school's pastoral team works effectively with pupils and their families to provide effective support. Pupils feel that their school encourages them to look after their emotional and mental health.

Pupils are proud to represent their school as Catholic ambassadors, school councillors, buddies and eco warriors. They say that these opportunities help them to support other pupils and to improve their school. Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting and musical activities. Many represent their school in competitions and events, where they have great success.

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

The school has been through a difficult time. There have been many staff changes since the previous inspection. This has caused everyone to be unsettled. It has also led to

pupils' progress faltering. This means that pupils have not achieved as well as they should. Leaders are keen to bring everyone together as a team and to help pupils to achieve highly. Work is well under way to support teachers and to help pupils to catch up.

Leaders have designed a new curriculum that reflects the interests of pupils and staff. The curriculum is clearly ordered to allow pupils to make links in their learning and build up their knowledge over time. For example, in history, pupils use what they have learned about Victorian mills to help them when they do a unit of work on canals later in the year. However, this is not happening as effectively in all subjects and year groups.

Leaders have made reading a priority throughout the school. Pupils enjoy reading books and listening to stories. Leaders make sure that children learn phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) from early in the Reception Year and provide books that help them to practise the sounds that they are learning. Teachers have benefited from training to support the teaching of phonics. As a result, pupils are making greater headway in knowing the sounds that letters make than they did in the past. However, this training has not been extended to teaching assistants. This means that pupils do not always benefit from the best support for their early reading. In recent years, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been below the national average.

The improved curriculum for writing and early mathematics is developing well. Effective training for teachers means that pupils' knowledge and skills are being taught in a logical manner. In turn, pupils' learning has improved considerably this year. Nevertheless, weaknesses in the curriculum in the past mean that some pupils have not remembered parts of what they have been taught. This makes it hard for them to build on prior learning. Leaders are focusing on filling these gaps in learning quickly.

Leaders for physical education (PE) have planned the curriculum for PE so that pupils can develop their skills. Leaders closely monitor pupils' progress to make sure that they know more and remember more over time. However, in some areas, the curriculum does not enable all pupils to build successfully on what they already know and can do.

Pupils develop well as young citizens of the future. They raise funds for charities and work with their local church, where the school choir sing regularly. Some pupils have talked with pupils from other schools to develop their understanding of, and respect for, cultural differences.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. This ensures that they learn, wherever possible, alongside their classmates in the classroom. Teachers are alert to the needs of this group and make sure that they do all they can to help them to succeed.

Leaders have worked hard to strengthen the links between home and school during a period of considerable change at the school. This has had some success. The majority of parents and carers who responded to the school's own questionnaires and to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, spoke positively about the school. However, there is still more to do to resolve some of the issues that parents have raised.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding governor works with leaders to ensure that arrangements to keep the school safe are monitored.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. Pupils spoken with during the inspection could explain how they stay safe in the real world and online.

The team responsible for leading safeguarding has systems in place to monitor pupils' safety. During the inspection, leaders showed me how they respond to any safeguarding concern, no matter how small, to make sure that pupils are safe. Pupils' safety was at the forefront of everyone's thinking.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some parents are concerned about the quality of their children's education and aspects of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Leaders, including governors, have not yet fully ensured parents' confidence in the school's leadership and management. This needs to develop so that parents feel that their views are considered by leaders and that their concerns are being addressed.
- Leaders are addressing historic weaknesses in phonics by developing the curriculum and providing training for teachers. Leaders must ensure that all teaching assistants also benefit from training so that they are able to provide high-quality support to pupils in early reading, particularly to those who are falling behind.
- Weaknesses in the curriculum in the past mean that some pupils have not remembered some of what they have been taught. Leaders must make sure that the systems in place to help pupils catch up quickly are thorough and well evaluated. This is so that historic weaknesses in performance are addressed effectively, thoroughly and in a timely fashion.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how pupils' learning is sequenced in the new curriculum. They must now ensure that the intended curriculum is taught effectively throughout the school. This will enable pupils to make links in their learning and build up their knowledge, understanding and skills over time.

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 in May 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	119489
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10087689
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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jane Armstrong
Headteacher	Bridget Parkinson
Website	www.st-marymagdalenesrc.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 May 2015

Information about this school

- The local authority has provided support for the school.
- The school has been through a period of turbulence due to changes in staffing over the past few years. Since the last inspection, the majority of governors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher have all joined the school. Additionally, the majority of teachers are new to post.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for Roman Catholic schools took place in March 2016.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I examined a range of documents, including improvement plans, self-evaluation information, safeguarding records, curriculum planning and a report from the local authority.
- I spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- I met with two representatives of the local authority who have supported the school's improvement process.
- I met with the chair of the governing body and other governors.

- I talked with pupils, both formally and informally, about behaviour and attitudes in school. I visited the dining hall at lunchtime and observed pupils' movement around the school.
- I focused deeply on reading, writing and PE. As part of this focus, I visited lessons and talked with leaders and teachers. I discussed pupils' learning with them and looked at their books.
- I considered the 71 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 68 responses to the free-text service, 22 responses to the online staff survey and 52 responses to the pupils' survey. I also considered a range of parent and pupil surveys sent to parents by school leaders.
- I listened to pupils from Years 1 and 2 read to a member of staff.

Inspection team

Gill Pritchard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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