

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Darwen

Limes Avenue, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 2SG

Inspection dates:

9 January 2020

Outcome

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Darwen continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Joseph's is a caring school which welcomes all. Leaders have high aspirations for pupils. Pupils told inspectors that staff tell them that they, 'can do anything as long as they put their mind to it'. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils value this. They say that it makes them feel safe and happy. Pupils work hard in lessons and enjoy learning together. They appreciate the activities that staff plan for them especially when they learn outdoors. Pupils are respectful towards each other, staff and visitors. They value each other's differences. Pupils say that one of the best things about their school is that they can be unique. They say that bullying is rare. If it ever did happen, it would be sorted out immediately.

Pupils learn that kindness matters. They are keen to help others. For example, older pupils enjoy wearing their purple jumpers and helping younger pupils around the school. Pupils also raise money for charities locally or for other countries. They are keen to make the world a better place to be. For example, pupils told us the importance of reducing the use of plastic and how they had done this in their own school.

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

The school is well led and managed. Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are always looking at how they can make the school even better. Leaders have spent time reviewing the curriculum alongside governors, staff and parents. They have made sure that it is well balanced and interesting. Leaders have made it clear what they want pupils to know at certain points in their education. This helps pupils to make links in their learning and remember key facts. Pupils' learning goes beyond what they learn in class. They enjoy taking part in clubs and activities outside of school. Pupils say that there is a wide range of opportunities for them to choose from. Teachers plan trips and invite visitors into school, to make pupils' learning relevant and fun.

Subject leaders receive relevant training and support. This has helped improve their subject knowledge. However, more support is needed for leaders who are new to their role. This will enable them to improve the quality of the curriculum in their subject.

Leaders place a high importance on making sure that all pupils' needs are met. Teachers use assessment information to plan activities that match pupils' abilities. This is particularly strong for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils are supported extremely well. This enables them to achieve to the best of their abilities.

The teaching of reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Leaders have invested in reading over the last few years. They have selected well-known children's books and stories. These books support pupils' learning across the curriculum. Pupils enjoy reading. They value the books that they can read at home. They particularly enjoy it when staff read to them. Pupils told us that they find these times special because they can 'disappear into another world and place in time'. The changes made to the teaching of reading have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Pupils who leave Year 6 achieve above the national average at the expected and higher standard.

At the start of Reception, children begin to learn phonics. Leaders check the progress that pupils make. Extra help is given to pupils who need to catch up. However, some younger pupils find reading difficult. This is because their reading books are not matched to the sounds that they are learning.

The teaching of mathematics is strong across the school. Pupils achieve well from Reception to Year 6. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use this to plan work that builds on what pupils already know. Pupils enjoy mathematics because of the challenge it brings.

The science curriculum has been planned well. It is clear what pupils should learn each year. Teachers check what pupils already know and can do. They use this information to plan the next lessons. Pupils spoken to could recall what they had learned before and how that was helping them now. Pupils enjoy learning, talking and experimenting together. They take pride in their work.

Across the school, pupils' behaviour is good and there is little disruption to learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that keeping children safe is a priority across the school. They carry out appropriate checks on all staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Staff receive regular training and updates. They know what to do if they think a child may be at risk. Leaders act quickly to follow up on any concerns. They work well with other agencies to protect children. Pupils learn about how to stay safe, for example when they are online and in their community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They do not have a strong enough knowledge of their subject. Leaders have provided support and training, but this needs to continue. This will allow all subject leaders to have the necessary skills to develop their subjects further and to keep governors informed of how pupils are achieving.
- The books that younger children read are not always well matched to the sounds they are learning. This hinders their early reading skills. Leaders need to make sure that children's reading books are more closely matched to the sounds they are learning. This will enable children to practise the phonics they are learning in school and to read more fluently.

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 St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Darwen to be good on 7–8 October 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 the school and 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

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| Unique reference number | 119667 |
| Local authority | Blackburn with Darwen |
| Inspection number | 10110993 |
| 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 | 168 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Joe Killalea |
| Headteacher | Anne O'Brien |
| Website | www.stjosephsdarwen.org |
| Date of previous inspection | 7–8 October 2015 |

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic primary school.
- The school has a before-school club.
- The school had its most recent section 48 inspection, undertaken by the Diocese of Salford, in March 2017.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, we spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. We spoke with members of the local governing body, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher, senior leaders and members of staff.
- We reviewed a range of documentation, including documentation about attendance, safeguarding and checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- We considered the 54 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. We also considered the 12 responses from the online staff survey and 120 responses to the pupils' survey.

- We looked in depth at reading, mathematics and science. This entailed: discussions with subject leaders; visits to lessons; looking at examples of children's work; discussions with teachers; discussions with children and listening to children read.

Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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