

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

St Monica's Close, Appleton, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 3AG

Inspection dates:

4–5 February 2020

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where teachers love teaching and pupils love learning. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to succeed. Pupils endeavour to live up to the schools expectations of 'always ready, always caring, always tidy'. They work hard and achieve well across a range of subjects.

The pupils who spoke with me said that they feel well cared for and safe in school. They are polite and behave well. They understand the different forms that bullying can take. Pupils told me they are confident that teachers will sort any bullying out. The school has recently received an award for its work on anti-bullying.

Pupils enjoy the different clubs that they can join, including drama, cinema and sports. They are very proud of the school's sporting achievements. Pupils have the chance to extend their learning through a range of activities outside of their lessons. For example, they perform with other schools at the Manchester Arena and they build shelters and light fires on residential trips. Links with a local Jewish primary school deepen pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Most parents and carers would recommend the school to others. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) particularly value the care and support that leaders provide for their children.

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

Leaders and staff have designed a curriculum that develops pupils' curiosity and independence. They have high expectations for all pupils to be successful, including pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils achieve well. For example, most pupils attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 in 2019.

Leaders have identified the specific subject knowledge they want pupils to have. The curriculum plans are carefully ordered to help pupils to achieve this. Staff receive high-

quality training. They work together to further develop their teaching expertise. Staff who spoke to me said that they feel valued and listened to by their leaders.

Teachers use information about pupils' achievement effectively. This means that they plan lessons which build on pupils' prior knowledge. There is little disruption during lessons because the curriculum meets pupils' needs well.

Children in the Reception class quickly learn the sounds that letters make. Staff provide opportunities for them to practise what they know during practical activities. In Year 1, pupils apply their phonics knowledge well when writing independently. For most pupils, the books that they read match the sounds and words that they are learning. A high proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2019. Pupils who struggle receive the help that they need to catch up. However, sometimes the books that this group of pupils read do not match the sounds that they know. They struggle to read new words. This hinders their ability to read texts fluently and with understanding.

Pupils love listening to stories. Older pupils enjoy reading books recommended to them by their teacher. Pupils read a variety of texts across a range of subjects. The wide selection of books available in the school library enhances pupils' access to quality texts. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the recent biography they have read on Emmeline Pankhurst. They are inspired by her work to improve the lives of women.

Teachers' planning sets out opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning before moving on to what they will learn next. For example, in mathematics, children in the Reception class practise their understanding of numbers. This helps them with work on place value in Year 1. Pupils told me how the work on simple fractions in Year 2 had helped them to successfully work with more complex fractions in Year 4.

In other subjects, leaders plan opportunities which enhance the curriculum further. For example, in the Reception class, children investigate the world around them by exploring how they can move water from one source to another. Field work and visits to historical places of interest give pupils first-hand experiences of geography and history. Pupils told me about their recent visit to a local coal-fired power station. In science, this led to a discussion about the sustainability of fossil fuels and the impact that these have on the environment.

Pupils take pride in their work. They hold positions of responsibility as members of committees and as 'buddies' for the younger pupils. At lunchtimes, pupils enjoy sitting on the 'top table' as a reward for their good conduct. Pupils contribute to their community by supporting local charities. They understand the importance of looking after the environment and they recycle what they can. This helps to prepare them to be responsible citizens of the future.

The governing body have a broad range of experience. The training they receive enables them to use their knowledge well to support and challenge leaders. Governors ensure that the good quality of education that pupils receive is maintained.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all checks are carried out on adults in school to make sure they are safe to be with pupils. Staff know the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about safeguarding. The training that staff receive enables them to support the most vulnerable pupils well. Leaders work with other agencies to provide additional support for parents. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Junior safety officers ensure that pupils know how to use the internet and social media safely and who to talk with if they have any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- When the books that some pupils read do not match the sounds and words that they know, it hinders their fluency as readers. When this is the case, pupils struggle to read new words and to understand what they are reading. Leaders need to ensure that teachers use assessment information accurately to select books that meet pupils' needs. This will enable all pupils to become confident and competent readers.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged St Monica's Catholic Primary School to be good on 10–11 July 2012.

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

Unique reference number	111322
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10087903
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	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Louise Barker
Headteacher	Annette Norman
Website	www.stmonicasprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2012

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in October 2017.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I spoke with the chair of governors, four members of the governing body, the headteacher, subject leaders and members of staff. I also met with a representative from the local authority and spoke with a representative from the diocese by phone.
- I considered the 67 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also considered the 10 responses from the online survey for staff. There were no responses to the pupils' survey.
- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, geography and mathematics. I met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils about their learning. I also looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- During the inspection, I reviewed a range of documentation, including documentation relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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