

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

Wood Street, Langley, Middleton, Manchester M24 5GL

Inspection dates:

18–19 February 2020

Outcome

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton 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?

Pupils like coming to school. The school is a hive of activity. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They also enjoy the wealth of trips, clubs and visitors to the school. Pupils practise yoga, learn to play musical instruments and go horse riding. They can join many clubs and activities before, during and after school.

Pupils are pleasant and polite to staff, visitors and each other. The 'Young Interpreters' help new pupils settle in. The 'High Fivers' make sure that everyone has someone to play with at breaktimes. The pupils that the inspector spoke with said that staff are good at resolving any problems. Bullying is rare and pupils feel safe. Sometimes pupils fall out, but this is sorted out quickly. In lessons and around school, pupils behave well. This means that everyone can get on with their work.

Previously, pupils have not achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are making much better progress now. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should do are increasing. The new reading and mathematics curriculums are helping pupils in key stages 1 and 2 to catch up quickly. However, children in early years do not have enough opportunities to improve their reading and number skills.

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

In the past, too few pupils have reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Across the school, including in the early years, pupils and children have not been sufficiently well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education. The current leadership team has taken swift and effective action to improve the curriculum, so as to improve pupils' outcomes in all subjects across the school. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes on pupils' achievement in the end of key stage tests.

Leaders have made sure that teachers now follow the school's curriculum plans. They have put in place effective training and support to improve teachers' subject knowledge. Leaders have made sure that teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils already know and can do. Importantly, leaders have set ambitious end points for each unit of work across the year groups.

Across the curriculum, most pupils are now working at the expected standards for their age. Teachers use the school's new assessment system to identify gaps in pupils' learning. This helps teachers better meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). More of these pupils access the curriculum alongside their classmates now. However, as leaders have identified, there are too few opportunities for children in the early years to develop and practise their reading and number skills. The curriculum is not suitably planned in the early years, particularly in relation to early reading and early mathematics.

That said, leaders have raised the profile of reading across the school. Older pupils enjoy the school's new library books, book corners and class novels. Pupils are motivated to read by the 'green reader' awards. More pupils are reading at home every day now. Leaders have given reading a greater priority. Every pupil has a reading lesson every day.

In the past, teachers dipped into different programmes for teaching phonics. The school now uses a single programme from the Reception class to Year 2. However, while teaching staff have all had training, there is some inconsistency in how teaching staff deliver the programme.

Leaders have assessed pupils and worked out which pupils are meeting the school's agreed milestones in reading. However, the intervention and catch-up programme for those pupils who are lagging behind in their reading is still in development. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they know in lessons. Leaders have bought more of these books so that pupils can take them home to read.

Pupils are attentive in lessons. They settle down to work quickly. They listen carefully to what their teacher tells them. Pupils work well with their classmates. They move sensibly around the school.

Leaders promote an extensive programme for pupils' personal development. They encourage pupils to take on roles and responsibilities across the school. For example, the 'Young Interpreters' help pupils, particularly those new to the country, to settle into school life. Pupils also reached the finals of a national debating competition held at Oxford University. Early years children are learning to ride a bicycle. Older pupils have been mastering horse riding. Pupils know the importance of good physical and mental health. Pupils achieve well in a range of sports, including swimming, tag rugby and basketball.

The new leadership team has quickly won the confidence and support of its colleagues. Teaching staff feel well supported to do their jobs now. This has raised staff morale across the school.

The governing body struggles to recruit new members. Moreover, some current members' attendance at meetings is sporadic. This has made it hard for governors to challenge leaders effectively in order to promote continual school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders carry out the required checks to reassure themselves that staff are suitable to work with pupils. Staff undertake regular safeguarding training. They understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff are quick to report any concerns. Leaders ensure that record-keeping is meticulous. They work effectively with external agencies to provide pupils and their families with specialist support.

Pupils feel safe in school. The school provides pupils with a wealth of support, including counselling. Pupils know that there are adults who they can talk to if they have any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 have not achieved well in reading over time. There remains some inconsistency and variability in the implementation of the school's phonics and early reading programmes. There is no consistent formal approach to extra support for those pupils who need help to catch up and keep up in reading. There are too few opportunities in the early years curriculum for children to practise and develop their reading skills. Leaders should act to ensure that children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1, including those with SEND, quickly become confident and competent readers.
- Children in early years do not have enough opportunities to use and understand number. This means that some children do not have a sufficiently secure foundation of mathematical knowledge ready for Year 1. Leaders should make sure that the early years mathematics curriculum gives children activities and experiences which enable them to achieve well.

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 Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton to be good on 2–3 February 2016.

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	105818
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10111051
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Hyde
Headteacher	Sarah Geddis
Website	www.stmrc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 February 2016

Information about this school

- This is a voluntary-aided Catholic primary school.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2015.
- A number of pupils join the school at times other than those which are typical. Some of these pupils are international new arrivals. Most of these pupils do not speak English when they arrive.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders, teachers and support staff. I spoke with the chair of governors and two members of the governing body. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- I spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- There were 26 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- I considered the 31 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were 72 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I met with staff and pupils.

- I met with the designated safeguarding lead. I reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding. I spoke with staff and pupils and considered the survey responses from staff, pupils, parents and carers around safeguarding.
- I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and around school. I spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of them.
- I looked in detail at reading, mathematics and physical education. For each of these subjects, I spoke to teachers and leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books as well as other evidence of their learning.
- For the school's next section 5 inspection, the inspector recommends that the subjects that the inspection team look at in depth might be reading, mathematics, art and science.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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