

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

Windrows, New Church Farm, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 8NP

Inspection date:

13 July 2021

Outcome

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

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school because there is a kind and caring atmosphere among pupils and staff. Pupils are happy and they have strong friendships with others.

Pupils feel safe in school. The relationships that they have with staff ensure that pupils feel comfortable talking to trusted adults. They said that bullying is rare, but that if it does happen, leaders deal with incidents well. Leaders and teachers help pupils to understand the harm bullying can do to others. At times, pupils' learning is disrupted because of minor incidents of misbehaviour.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should because the expectations that have been set for their learning in the past have been too low. Although this situation is now changing for the better, many pupils have gaps in their knowledge across a range of subjects.

Leaders have planned the curriculum to include activities to enrich pupils' learning through trips and visitors to school. Now that the pandemic restrictions are being eased, pupils are starting to experience some of the wider opportunities that are available, such as having visiting speakers coming into the school.

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

Governors have steered the school through some difficult times in the recent past. They have brought all staff together to share a vision for making the school better. Senior leaders have recently focused on developing the curriculum. They are setting higher expectations of what pupils can do. However, a legacy of underachievement still hampers

pupils' progress through the improving curriculum. Staff feel that senior leaders are considerate of their workload. Senior leaders support staff well in developing and improving their teaching practice.

Leaders have planned an appropriately ambitious curriculum. It sets out well what pupils need to learn and how this should build over time. However, in moving to this new curriculum, teachers have not checked and adapted these plans well enough to recognise what pupils already know and can do. Pupils do not make links between what they are learning now and what they have learned in the past. They have not had enough opportunities to remember essential knowledge as well as they should in subjects such as history and geography.

Leaders have made reading a top priority. They have invested in a new set of books which match the different stages of pupils' learning. Teachers' plans are clear about what they want pupils to learn. Phonics teaching is helping pupils to read words with increasing efficiency in the Reception Year. However, due to previously weak delivery of the curriculum, there are gaps in older pupils' reading knowledge. This has been made worse by the disruption caused to their education during the pandemic. Despite providing individualised help for pupils, some of the least able pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not catching up as quickly as they should.

In mathematics, leaders have reorganised how the subject is taught so that any gaps in knowledge can be revisited more easily. The mathematics programme ensures that there is a clear route for pupils to follow. This is aiding them to build on what they know as they learn new topics. Despite this, there are still gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding, including those with SEND. Although teachers are addressing these gaps in knowledge, the expectations set for pupils' achievement are still not high enough to match the intended curriculum.

The curriculum includes activities to enrich pupils' cultural understanding, through trips and visitors to school. The recent visit from a reptile show helped pupils to strengthen their scientific knowledge about animals. Other activities are designed to improve pupils' physical and mental health and develop their ability to make positive relationships. Leaders place a strong emphasis on pupils demonstrating respect and care for others.

Pupils told inspectors that their learning can be disrupted at times by other pupils' behaviour. Some pupils talk over the teacher and show a lack of respect for others. This is often due to pupils' needs not being met sufficiently well. For example, children in the Reception Year behave well and follow instructions immediately because they are so engrossed in their learning. However, there is a mixed picture across the school. Some low-level disruption continues to have an effect on some pupils' learning. Leaders are reviewing their behaviour policy and practice to address pupils' needs more effectively.

In discussion with the headteacher, inspectors agreed that mathematics and geography may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils said that they feel safe at school. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum helps pupils to understand and manage risks. As a result, pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Staff have received appropriate training. They are vigilant and aware of the local risks to pupils.

Governors have a strong understanding of their safeguarding duties. They check on the appropriateness of arrangements in school to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have prioritised reading well but some of the less able pupils are struggling to catch up to the new expectations that leaders have set. This means that these pupils are not reading fluently and confidently. Leaders should ensure that pupils who have fallen behind in reading are supported in catching up with the planned curriculum more swiftly.
- Leaders have put an ambitious curriculum in place. However, a legacy of underachievement means that pupils are not well equipped to benefit from the raised expectations. Teachers should ensure that they check pupils' starting points more precisely and then help pupils to cover lost ground so that they can learn as well as leaders expect, including in mathematics.
- In subjects across the curriculum, pupils do not remember the essential learning for each subject. This means that they cannot build on their prior knowledge in order to know and remember more. Leaders should ensure that teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to consolidate the essential learning in subjects such as history and geography.
- Leaders have been tackling disruptive behaviour. However, low-level disruption continues to affect the learning of some pupils. Leaders should develop teachers' strategies to manage behaviour so as to prevent any disruption to pupils' learning and to ensure that all pupils treat each other with respect.

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 or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 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 information from Parent View 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 [here](#).

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	119592
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10183999
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	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Emma Heywood
Headteacher	Annette Birmingham
Website	http://www.stedmundswestlancs.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 June 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Edmund's is a Roman Catholic school.
- The most recent section 48 inspection took place in December 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due by December 2022.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the staff, including senior leaders. The new headteacher took up the post in September 2020.
- The secondment of two teachers ends in September 2021. Two new teachers have been appointed to replace these staff members.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors considered reading, mathematics, geography and history in depth as part of this inspection. For these subjects, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils. They undertook an analysis of pupils' work and visited lessons. Inspectors heard pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read. They also looked at pupils' work in subjects across the curriculum, as well as plans for each of these subjects.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the school staff. The lead inspector also spoke to two governors and held a discussion with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the archdiocese.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from across the school to ask them about safeguarding. They reviewed documentation which included the school's safeguarding policy, the register of the checks carried out on new employees and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors also met with pupils to ask them about their learning in a range of subjects and about the opportunities that they have for their personal development.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and considered 10 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Liz Kelly

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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