

Inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School

Alexandra Street, Newtown, Wigan, Lancashire WN5 9DS

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 September 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being at school and they feel safe. They are confident and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils value being part of a strong and welcoming school community. They feel that staff listen to them and value their feedback. Pupils carry out leadership responsibilities with pride, such as being a 'knight' to younger pupils. They also relish the opportunity to contribute to their community, such as working with local care homes.

Pupils know that staff expect them to learn as much as they can, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. Even so, pupils do not build up their knowledge equally well across all subjects in the curriculum.

Pupils know that they will get help if they need it. Staff quickly identify pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), so that they get appropriate support.

Pupils behave well and enjoy playing together at breaktimes. Pupils said that bullying is very rare. They said that staff sort out any problems that occur. Some parents or carers did not agree with this. However, leaders' records show that they follow up instances of unacceptable behaviour thoroughly.

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

Trustees and governors have worked closely with leaders and other staff to begin to develop an increasingly well-thought-out curriculum. They have begun to check how well pupils are learning. Leaders and staff are creating clear subject guidance that sets out the knowledge that they want pupils to learn, and the order that they should learn it. Leaders have implemented their new curriculum plans fully in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils build up their knowledge well in these subjects.

In other subjects, teachers do not follow leaders' guidance and new curriculum plans with equal rigour. In addition, the curriculum plans in some subjects are not as ambitious as others. The knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn is not fully identified. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should across the whole curriculum.

Conversely, children in the early years achieve well. Teaching staff make effective use of the detailed guidance and curriculum plans that leaders provide to early years staff. Staff provide well-matched support because they know the children well. Children settle quickly, behave well and are keen to learn new things.

Leaders have successfully prioritised reading. Most pupils read fluently and with accuracy by the time they are in Year 2. Teachers and other staff are well trained. They provide effective support to help pupils learn to read. Staff use agreed methods across the school to help pupils to start to learn to read as soon as they can. For example, children in the Nursery, including two-year-olds, listen out for the sounds that will enable them to read. Children in the Reception Year steadily build up their phonics knowledge. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils get any extra support that they need with reading. Leaders ensure that pupils practise the sounds that they know with suitable and engaging reading books. Older pupils know that they are expected to practise reading regularly. They recognise how important this is.

Across the school, teachers use assessment information increasingly well to check what pupils already know or can do. Staff are adept at spotting pupils who may be struggling to keep up with their peers. Leaders find out the reasons why and ensure suitable support is in place. The special needs coordinator (SENCo) and other leaders make sure that any additional support is working well. This ensures that pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as other pupils in their class.

Pupils respond well when leaders and other staff challenge them to do their best. Most pupils are keen to be in school every day. However, there are some pupils who are regularly absent from school.

Leaders have thought carefully about pupils' wider personal development in their plans for the curriculum. They enable pupils to 'spread their wings' and try as many new things as possible. Pupils take part in times of reflection, including prayer and worship, with their local parish. Pupils are eagerly anticipating the restarting of the clubs and extra-curricular activities that happened before the pandemic. Older pupils are keen to contribute their ideas about how to improve their school or local community as school councillors or head of school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff know how to spot safeguarding risks. Staff are confident in knowing how and when to raise concerns. Leaders keep a close eye on the most vulnerable pupils in the school. Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils get any support that they need.

Pupils learn about important aspects of safety. Leaders ensure that pupils develop resilience. Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, especially when they are online. They are happy to share their worries with adults. They trust staff at the school to keep them safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The subject guidance and curriculum plans that leaders have developed do not enable pupils to build up their knowledge equally well across curriculum subjects. Some curriculum plans are not sufficiently ambitious. As a result, pupils do not learn as much as they should. Some pupils cannot remember the essential knowledge that leaders expect them to know. Leaders should revise and refine their curriculum plans. They also need to check that teachers are following the subject guidance and curriculum plans that they provide so that pupils' achievement continues to improve.
- Some pupils have low attendance and are missing out on some core elements of their learning. As a result, they are not able to achieve as well as they would have if they had been in school every day. Leaders must continue to ensure that all pupils attend regularly so that they achieve well across the curriculum.

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 Ofsted 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.

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	144340
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10200842
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of local governing body	Carole Sinclair
Headteacher	Kayleigh Ferguson
Website	www.saintmarks.wigan.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school opened as an academy on 1 April 2017. It is sponsored by the Wings' CE Trust.
- This school is a Church of England school. Its last section 48 inspection took place in April 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due in 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school, including the SENCo. Inspectors spoke with a group of governors and trustees, including the chair of the local governing board, the chief executive officer and the chair of trustees. They also spoke with a representative from the local authority.

- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including: the school central record of staff and visitors; staff training records; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, geography and science. They talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the 22 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 17 free-text responses from parents, to find out their views of the school. They also spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Claire Hollister

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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