

# Inspection of a good school: St Alban's Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Trinity Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 5BN

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Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2021

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St Alban's is a happy place where pupils feel cared for. Each morning pupils run into school excited about the day ahead. They thrive on the supportive relationships that exist between pupils and staff. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that staff will listen to them if they have any worries.

Pupils are polite. They show respect towards each other and to the adults who work with them. Pupils live up to the high expectations that teachers have for their behaviour. Pupils are proud of their achievements and they enjoy learning.

Pupils play happily together. They told the inspector that bullying and name-calling are rare because teachers will deal with it. If they do fall out with their friends, staff help them to resolve problems quickly.

Pupils spoke fondly about their experiences on a wide range of trips, including a trip to a chocolate factory and an art museum. They are excited about joining the sports clubs that are now on offer.

Pupils benefit from a curriculum that is delivered well across most subjects. However, there are inconsistencies in how teachers deliver the early reading curriculum. This means that younger pupils do not get the best start in becoming confident and fluent readers.

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

Leaders have designed a suitably ambitious curriculum for pupils, including children in the early years. They have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn in most subjects. For example, in history and mathematics, leaders have carefully laid out the knowledge that pupils will learn and the order in which they will learn it. That said, in a very small number of subjects, leaders have not set out precisely what pupils should know. This prevents some teachers from designing learning that builds effectively on what pupils already know and do in these subjects.

In most subjects, leaders support teachers to develop their subject knowledge and expertise. This means that teachers use curriculum plans effectively to plan lessons that help pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to build on earlier learning. Pupils deepen their learning over time. In addition, subject leaders support teachers to prioritise the development of pupils' vocabulary. This means that pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, can communicate effectively.

Teachers are supported well to identify pupils' needs and to adapt resources so that pupils with SEND can access the ambitious curriculum. Leaders ensure that those pupils who need specialist support from external agencies get the help that they need. Pupils with SEND achieve well in most subjects. That said, they are not getting off to the best start with their reading.

Leaders and governors do not have an accurate view of how well staff are delivering the phonics and early reading curriculum. Leaders have not ensured that pupils, including children in the early years, learn new sounds in a consistent way. Although recent training has helped teachers to make the learning of sounds more fun, it has not ensured that staff use a consistent approach. Leaders have invested in a wide range of books for pupils to practise their reading. However, the books that some younger pupils read are often too difficult and do not match the sounds that they know. This hinders younger pupils' fluency and confidence in reading. Conversely, older pupils develop their reading comprehension well. They enjoy the books that adults read to them and know about a wide range of authors.

Leaders have carefully assessed the impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic on pupils' learning in most subjects. Teachers make effective use of the information that they gain from assessment to inform their teaching. They ensure that pupils can revisit previous learning and catch up on missing building blocks. This approach works particularly well in mathematics.

Pupils, including children in the early years, behave well. Children in the early years join in enthusiastically with songs, stories and rhymes. Pupils listen attentively in lessons and respond well to the challenges that teachers set for them. Pupils' learning is rarely interrupted.

Pupils value the opportunities on offer to develop their talents and aspirations. A range of activities support pupils' wider development. For example, pupils who are interested in the environment can join the 'eco team' to promote ways to look after the planet.

Staff appreciate the ongoing efforts of leaders and governors to ensure that their workload is manageable. Staff feel valued and cared for by leaders.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that reading may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that keeping pupils safe is a priority for all staff. Staff know pupils and their families well. Leaders provide regular training to ensure that adults remain vigilant to the risks that pupils face. Leaders act quickly to put the right support in place when it is needed.

Pupils learn about potential dangers and risks beyond the school. For example, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and they learn how to ride their bike safely on the road.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not ensured a consistent approach to the delivery of the phonics and early reading curriculum. This means that by the end of Year 2, too many pupils struggle to become confident and fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that pupils benefit from a systematic and consistent approach to synthetic phonics, and that the books pupils read are carefully matched to the sounds that they know.
- In a small number of subjects, leaders' curriculum plans lack sufficient detail about the knowledge that pupils need to know and when. This hampers teachers in their aim to design learning that allows pupils to build on what they know already. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans in these subjects provide teachers with enough information to design learning that helps pupils to build successfully on earlier content.

## 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, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 7 and 8 July 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119706
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackburn with Darwen
<b>Inspection number</b>	10199931
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Edward Baker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Claire Speakman
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stalbansrcprimaryschool.co.uk">www.stalbansrcprimaryschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 and 8 July 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St Alban's Roman Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school. It belongs to the Diocese of Salford. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in November 2015.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During this inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The inspector spoke with members of the governing body, members of staff and a representative from both the local authority and the Diocese of Salford.
- The inspector spoke with pupils both formally and informally, about their work and school life.

- The inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy designated safeguarding lead. The inspector looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, and reviewed leaders' checks on newly appointed staff.
- The inspector spoke with parents and carers and considered the six responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff survey or Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

### **Inspection team**

Garry White, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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