

Inspection of a good school: Altham St James Church of England Primary School

Altham St James CE Primary School, Burnley Road, Altham, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 5UH

Inspection date:

16 November 2021

Outcome

Altham St James Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this friendly, caring and welcoming school. They describe their teachers as kind and helpful. Staff and pupils treat each other with respect. Staff help pupils to follow the school's motto, 'love each other as I have loved you'. The school is a happy and safe place. Pupils and staff describe the school as 'like a family'.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. Pupils are well supported by staff to meet these high expectations. They achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils are keen to try their best. They move calmly and quietly around the school. Children in the Reception class play well together. Pupils strive to earn rewards and prizes for behaving well. Any incidents of misbehaviour are sorted out by staff quickly. Should any bullying occur, pupils are confident that adults will take appropriate action.

Pupils love playing and exploring in the school's spacious outdoor area. At breaktimes, pupils are happily engaged playing football or climbing in the adventure area. They appreciate sitting quietly in the outdoor worship area when they want quiet time. Pupils new to the school settle quickly and make friends.

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

Leaders have planned an interesting and carefully balanced curriculum which is firmly rooted in the national curriculum. Leaders help pupils to work hard in their learning and not give up if something is tricky. Pupils develop their knowledge across a range of subjects. They leave the school well prepared for the next stage of education.

Across subjects, leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they intend pupils to learn and remember. Staff have thought carefully about the order that pupils learn this important knowledge. The curriculum plans ensure that pupils' learning builds

on what they already know. For example, in mathematics, pupils develop their fluency in written calculations in carefully planned steps. Leaders are taking effective action to ensure that the new curriculum in the Reception class lays the right foundations for pupils' future learning.

In mathematics and English, teachers make regular and precise checks to see how well pupils are learning. Teachers use this information to support pupils where needed. In some other subjects, checks are not as detailed. This means that in these subjects, teachers do not know exactly which important knowledge pupils are remembering.

Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They have not had recent experience or training in checking how well the curriculum is helping pupils to learn. These new subject leaders are at an early stage in supporting other teachers in delivering the curriculum.

Leaders have ensured that pupils learn to read in a well-planned order. Staff have benefited from effective training in teaching the reading curriculum. They make sure that pupils use their phonics knowledge successfully when reading unfamiliar words. Staff match reading books carefully to pupils' reading ability. This means that pupils can practise and develop their reading skills successfully. The small number of pupils that struggle with their early reading are given regular and effective support by teachers. This ensures that pupils develop as fluent readers. This includes pupils with SEND.

Pupils value the time teachers give them to read for pleasure. Children in the Reception class enjoy sharing a range of engaging books and stories with staff. Older pupils are enthusiastic in describing the varied and interesting books their teachers read with them. One pupil described their pleasure in how reading 'takes you to another place'.

Leaders take steps to ensure that any additional needs that pupils may have are identified quickly. In mathematics and English, staff identify precisely what help pupils need to keep up with their learning. In lessons, teachers make sure that pupils with SEND get the help they need. This helps these pupils to learn the same curriculum as their peers, where possible.

Pupils enjoy the visits and activities that leaders provide to enrich and deepen their learning experiences. For example, pupils visit museums and places of interest as part of their learning in history and geography.

Leaders provide pupils with useful opportunities to learn to develop as thoughtful and caring individuals. For example, pupils learn about different cultures and experiences through the books that teachers share with them. Pupils learn to appreciate and value differences. They know that all are equal. Through close links with the parish, leaders develop pupils' spiritual awareness. Older pupils enjoy their leadership roles, for example organising the school's library area.

Staff enjoy working at the school. Leaders are considerate of staff well-being when making decisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff have regular and detailed safeguarding training. This means that staff are alert to possible signs of abuse and neglect. They understand what action to take if they have any concerns.

The curriculum that leaders have planned helps pupils to stay safe. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of alcohol and drugs. They learn how to keep themselves safe when working online. Pupils know that they should speak to an adult in school if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders and teachers do not have a precise knowledge of how well pupils are knowing and remembering the taught curriculum. This means that teachers do not know if pupils have acquired secure foundations for future learning. Leaders should ensure that in these subjects, systems are in place to enable staff to check how well pupils are learning.
- Subject leaders who are new to their roles have had limited training and expertise in leading their subjects. They lack the expertise to check precisely how well pupils are learning the curriculum. Leaders should ensure they provide high-quality training for new subject leaders to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2011.

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	119577
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10204442
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	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rennie Pinder
Headteacher	Carol Woods
Website	www.altham.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 December 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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. Inspectors observed pupils reading to a familiar adult. They also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about school life. They held meetings with the headteacher and governors. Inspectors met with a representative of the local authority. They spoke by telephone with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation, which included the leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff questionnaire and the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the free-text comments. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. They spoke with staff to explore their understanding of how to keep pupils safe. Inspectors reviewed the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, staff and pupils to discuss provision for pupils' personal development and behaviour. They looked at documentation associated with these areas.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff to discuss leaders' support for them.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ian Hardman

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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