

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

Whitelees Road, Littleborough, Lancashire OL15 8DU

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 November 2021

Outcome

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Littleborough continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and happy at St Mary's. They are keen to come to school and to be first in line to enter their classrooms. Pupils are greeted each morning by staff who genuinely care about them. Parents and carers describe the school as a big family.

Staff have high expectations of what all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can do. Pupils behave well and focus on their learning in lessons. They achieve well as a result.

Pupils enjoy their playtimes. They climb on the trim trail and play ball games in the multi-use games area. This supports them to keep physically healthy. Typically, pupils behave well at playtimes. If their play becomes too boisterous, well-trained adults help them to make the right choices. Pupils appreciate this support. They said that teachers deal with any behavioural incidents, including bullying, 'very well'.

Pupils take an active part in raising money for charity. This includes supporting local charities such as the food bank. They enjoy taking on responsibilities. Pupils who are part of the 'GIFT' team take their role very seriously. They know it is important to help the school community 'grow in faith together'.

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

Leaders have ensured that all pupils, including pupils with SEND, benefit from a broad curriculum that excites and interests them. Curriculum plans in some subjects are well established. Leaders have ensured that all staff have the expertise to deliver these plans. Pupils build their learning securely over time and achieve well in these subjects. In other subjects, leaders have refined their curriculum plans but changes are more recent and not fully embedded.

Leaders in the early years have designed an ambitious curriculum that builds the most important knowledge that the youngest children need. Children in the early years are highly motivated and are keen to learn. They behave exceptionally well. These high standards of behaviour are maintained throughout the school. This helps all pupils to learn with minimal distraction.

Phonics is taught from the moment children enter the Reception Year. They benefit from a well-planned phonics programme taught by skilled staff. Pupils practise their reading using books that match the sounds they are learning. Those who need extra support have regular opportunities to read to adults. This helps them to develop their fluency and confidence.

Pupils have access to a well-stocked library full of quality texts. They enjoy reading and having books read to them. Pupils are encouraged to read to deepen their knowledge in other subjects. By the time they leave Year 6, most pupils are confident readers.

Staff revisit and check what pupils know in all subjects. This helps them to build on what pupils have learned before. Leaders ensure that staff have the training and skills needed to identify pupils who may have SEND. Teachers plan suitable next steps of learning for these pupils. Pupils with SEND access a curriculum that is carefully matched to their needs. They achieve well as a result.

Leaders carefully consider pupils' wider development. Leaders' plans are rooted in the Catholic ethos of the school. Pupils recognise and celebrate diversity. They enjoy learning about other cultures in subjects such as art and music. Pupils understand that both men and women have made significant contributions to our heritage.

Pupils enjoy attending the range of after-school clubs on offer. Pupils in Year 6 were thankful that their recent residential trip went ahead. They benefited from the opportunity to build up their confidence and resilience.

Staff enjoy being part of the school team. Leaders think carefully about staff well-being and their professional development. They ensure all staff are trained to carry out their roles well and that their workloads are well managed.

Governors bring a range of expertise and experience to their role. They are kept well informed by leaders. This enables governors to offer leaders informed support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders with safeguarding responsibilities are well trained. They provide regular safeguarding updates to all staff and check that key messages have been understood. Leaders ensure that staff recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and know how to report any concerns.

Leaders work closely with families and a range of external agencies to help keep pupils safe.

The school's safeguarding team provides pupils with additional support when they need it. This includes support for mental health.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using technology.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Over time, pupils have not benefited from well-sequenced plans in some subjects. Leaders have only recently identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to know and remember in these subjects. Pupils' knowledge has not built equally well in all subjects of the curriculum as a result. Leaders should ensure that, where curriculum plans have only recently been revised, they are implemented fully. This will support pupils to build on what they know and can do in all subjects as they move through the school.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 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	105816
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10204408
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	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anthony Cragg
Headteacher	Carmel Ruane
Website	www.stmarysrclboro.rochdale.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	4 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has reduced in size and is now a headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. The assistant headteacher joined the school in September 2021.
- This is a Roman Catholic school. Its last section 48 inspection took place in January 2015.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school.

- The inspector spoke with governors, including the vice chair of the governing body. She met with a representative of the local authority and held a telephone discussion with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspector considered the views of parents and carers shared through Parent View. She also spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- The inspector considered the views of staff shared through the staff surveys. There were no responses to consider from the pupil survey.
- The inspector checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. She reviewed documentation and spoke to leaders and staff about safeguarding.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. She spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school, including how safe they feel.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Deep dives were carried out in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector observed pupils reading to a trusted adult.
- The inspector also looked at the plans and spoke to curriculum leaders for other subjects on the school's curriculum.

Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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