

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham

Victoria Road, Kirkham, Preston, Lancashire PR4 2BT

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 January 2022

Outcome

The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love attending this nurturing school. They are all made to feel part of the 'Willows family'. Pupils arrive each morning eager to learn. This is because teachers make learning memorable and fun. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve exceptionally well. Pupils enjoy close and caring relationships with each other. Many parents and carers describe the school as 'wonderful'.

Leaders and governors are very ambitious for all pupils. They ensure that pupils are offered a wide range of experiences and opportunities. Pupils enjoy taking part in activities such as archery club or learning how to play a musical instrument. They are proud to be part of the highly accomplished school orchestra and choir.

Pupils work incredibly hard in lessons and they display exemplary behaviour throughout the school day. They understand the high expectations that teachers have of them. Pupils are enthused by the house points and praise that they receive as rewards for their superb attitudes to school life. Older pupils take pride in modelling excellent behaviour to their 'buddies' in the Reception class.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know that their teachers will listen to any worries that they might have. Pupils have complete confidence that staff would resolve any issues of bullying or name-calling immediately.

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

Leaders have developed a high-quality, broad and balanced curriculum from the early years to Year 6. They plan topics that inspire pupils to want to learn more. Subject leaders have carefully thought through how best to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers are clear about the key knowledge they want all pupils to acquire. Teachers also make sure that pupils can see the link between what they learn and how this will help them in real-life situations. Pupils have regular opportunities to recap what they have learned.

This helps all pupils, including those with SEND and children in the early years, achieve exceptionally well.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to deepen and build on pupils' knowledge and subject-related vocabulary. Children in the Reception class talked confidently about objects being shared equally, during a mathematics session. Year 4 pupils explained how they used their prior knowledge of the four rules of number to test out which are commutative.

Leaders have continued to make reading a priority across the school. Children are taught phonics as soon as they enter the Reception class. Well-trained staff expertly deliver tailored phonics sessions across the early years and key stage 1. They regularly assess the progress that pupils are making. Those few pupils who find reading more difficult receive additional sessions to help them catch up quickly. Staff effectively build pupils' reading knowledge with books that closely match the sounds that they know and understand.

Older pupils talked with enthusiasm about reading. They read a variety of books from a wide range of authors. Pupils particularly enjoy the class novels that their teachers read to them. They are also grateful to receive their own book as a gift from school leaders each year. Pupils develop into confident and highly competent readers over time. This helps them to access the full curriculum and contributes to their very strong achievement across all subjects.

Staff have been trained to ensure that any pupils with SEND are quickly identified. Teachers make a range of skilful adaptations, where necessary, to ensure pupils with SEND can access the full curriculum. As a result, these pupils achieve extremely well.

Pupils understand the diverse nature of the world in which they live. They talked knowledgeably about different religions and they have a strong understanding of British values. Pupils maturely carry out their different responsibilities in school. The 'liturgy leaders' enjoy being able to lead worship in school assemblies. Pupils recognise that there are people less fortunate than themselves. They are keen to help others. For instance, they recently organised fundraising activities for a foodbank in the local community.

Pupils are unfailingly polite. They show high levels of respect for all of those around them. On the playground and across school, they behave impeccably. Pupils explained that learning in lessons is not interrupted by any pupils misbehaving.

Staff are proud to be part of the school team. They are appreciative of the support for their workload and well-being that they receive from leaders and governors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Teachers have been trained well to spot the signs that the welfare of any pupil may be at risk. Staff know how to report concerns. They know that leaders will act swiftly to deal

with any issues. Leaders are tenacious in their efforts to ensure that pupils and their families receive the necessary support from outside agencies.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. This includes when playing outside in the local area or on the internet. Teachers use the curriculum effectively to teach pupils about the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in December 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 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	119626
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10199476
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	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Christine Johnson
Headteacher	Sharon Barnett
Website	www.willows.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 December 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- This is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school. The school had its most recent section 48 inspection in November 2021.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The governing body manages the before- and after-school 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 with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the Diocese of Lancaster.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, music and mathematics. This involved visiting lessons with subject leaders, discussing curriculum plans, talking to

pupils and teachers and looking at pupils' work. He observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- The inspector also held discussions with the subject leaders for physical education and history.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes, lunchtime and during lessons. Pupils also talked to the inspector about their views of their school.
- The inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector also reviewed the responses to the pupil and staff questionnaire.
- The inspector checked leaders' safeguarding procedures. He viewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including leaders' approaches to the recording of incidents.

Inspection team

John Tomlinson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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