

Inspection of a good school: St Monica's Roman Catholic Primary School

43 Hoxton Street, London N1 6QN

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2022

Outcome

St Monica's Roman Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's motto is, 'a small school where big things happen'. This is certainly true in the way in which staff encourage pupils to always aim high. The curriculum is planned to enable pupils to achieve well. In most curriculum subjects, pupils build up their knowledge effectively.

Leaders and staff help pupils to grow in confidence and develop their understanding of right and wrong. Pupils work hard in lessons and display positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils are taught the value of helping each other. They enjoy supporting one another with their learning. Pupils see themselves as being part of one team, working towards the same aims.

Pupils like taking part in the wide range of creative and sports activities available. Football club or learning to play a musical instrument are popular choices. Staff invite specialist teachers into school regularly. Pupils said how much they like the opportunities they have to sing and dance at school.

Pupils described this as a 'telling school', where staff encourage them to speak up if they feel worried. This helps to make sure that pupils are safe. Pupils are taught that bullying is wrong and unkind. Any bullying, friendship issues or unkind behaviour are spotted and addressed quickly by staff.

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

Leaders plan the curriculum so that it is broad and follows a clear sequence. They review and adapt the curriculum so that it remains demanding while taking account of pupils' needs and interests. Over time, pupils develop their knowledge of subjects effectively. The early years curriculum provides children with a strong start. Here, Reception children are well prepared for their future learning in key stage 1 and beyond.

In most curriculum subjects, leaders give teachers clear guidance on what knowledge to teach pupils and when. Typically, teachers use this guidance well. Where teachers are less experienced, leaders provide them with the support that they need. For example, leaders help staff to make sure that teaching focuses on essential subject content. Teachers explain things well and break down new concepts into information that pupils can make sense of. They check that pupils understand and can recall important knowledge. When pupils are ready, teaching introduces them to more demanding subject content. Teachers ensure that pupils use their existing knowledge to grasp new ideas.

In a few subjects, however, leaders' curriculum thinking is not as developed. They are not as clear about what pupils need to learn and remember over time. Sometimes, pupils are taught new ideas, but these are not repeated or revisited. This makes it harder for pupils to secure their understanding and build up their knowledge over time.

Children begin learning to read from their first day at school. Phonics is well planned and taught, and pupils quickly learn to read well. As pupils progress through the school, they have many opportunities to read and practise their phonics knowledge. Leaders have made sure that teachers get useful training to develop their expertise in teaching reading. Leaders have also invested in new books to support the reading programme. This means that pupils can practise at home the phonics knowledge they learn at school.

Fiction and non-fiction books adorn the corridors and classrooms. Pupils choose books from the vast selection available in the school library. Here, staff also recommend books to pupils that they know they will enjoy. Pupils choose interesting books that introduce them to a wide-ranging vocabulary. This includes contemporary fiction and classical writers.

Leaders promote pupils' wider development well. The carefully planned curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education helps pupils prepare for the wider world. This includes moving into adulthood and the responsibilities this brings. Pupils also take on school-wide responsibilities. For example, pupils join the school council and can be playground assistants to help out younger pupils. Pupils behave well in lessons. This means that their learning is not disrupted.

Leaders' identification of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is precise and thorough. Pupils' needs are understood, and additional support is honed to these needs. Pupils with SEND secure their understanding of essential knowledge in a logical way because staff make suitable adaptations to tasks.

The governing body is efficient and well run. Its members work hard and possess a good balance of skills. They ask leaders probing questions, but are also supportive of their work to improve the school further. Governors' expectations are high. Making sure that staff workload is manageable is a clear priority for leaders.

The work of leaders is appreciated by parents and carers. They particularly value the way in which leaders work supportively with them, as well as keeping them well informed about the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders foster a strong safeguarding culture. This supports leaders' and governors' goal of ensuring that all pupils are kept safe.

Staff are aware of the potential dangers that pupils may experience and are trained to report any concerns. These are quickly followed up and acted on by leaders. Leaders work with parents and outside agencies to support and protect those pupils who are at risk of harm.

The curriculum develops pupils' awareness of potential dangers and how to avoid them. Pupils of all ages are taught how to recognise situations that may represent a risk to their welfare. They learn how to use the internet safely and how to speak out if something concerns them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not clearly outlined their expectations for pupils' learning in a few curriculum areas. This means that, in these areas, pupils are not developing and deepening their knowledge as fully as they do in other subjects. Leaders should ensure that their curriculum thinking is equally clear in all subject areas. This work should focus on making sure that pupils retain and apply essential subject 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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2017.

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

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| Unique reference number | 100268 |
| Local authority | Hackney |
| Inspection number | 10211101 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 226 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Simon Lee |
| Headteacher | Amanda Ruthven |
| Website | www.stmonicasprimaryhackney.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in December 2015.

Information about this inspection

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

- As part of this inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, the assistant headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. The inspector also held meetings with teachers.
- The inspector held an online conversation with members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector held a conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils at break- and lunchtimes.
- The inspector considered information relating to safeguarding, including the school's single central record of vetting checks on adults working at the school.
- The inspector took account of responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, and the views of parents spoken with at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Tim McLoughlin, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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