

Inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Robinson Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 5PE

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school. Pupils concentrate and work hard in lessons to live up to the high expectations that leaders and staff have of them. Pupils achieve well. They appreciate the way that teachers help them if they get muddled.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They move around the school calmly and with purpose in line with teachers' high expectations. Pupils show great respect for each other and adults. Pupils are confident and eager to share their learning with visitors.

Pupils feel safe in school. This is because they know that there is always a trusted adult with whom they can share any worries or concerns. Pupils are certain that staff will act swiftly to stop any bullying that may occur.

Leaders provide many opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. These include a varied range of clubs at lunchtime and after school. These clubs are complemented by a strong curriculum that enables pupils to develop as well-rounded youngsters who understand fundamental British values. Pupils are passionate about contributing to school life. For example, they work as school councillors and 'well-being champions' who support and promote the positive mental health of others.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those in the early years. The curriculum matches the national curriculum and meets the varied needs of pupils who attend the school. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary and reading knowledge so that they can easily access learning in other subjects. In most subjects, the curriculum is well ordered. It allows pupils to build on what they already know. This means that pupils, including those in the early years, achieve well.

In a few subjects, pupils sometimes struggle to link the knowledge that they already have to more complex ideas. This is because the curriculums for these subjects do not make it clear what pupils should be taught and when this should happen. Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They have limited knowledge and experience of how to check the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning.

Children in the early years benefit from a well-organised curriculum and a stimulating environment that is rich in vocabulary. Activities are carefully planned to build on what children can do and what is being taught.

From the time that children start in the Reception class, they follow a carefully thought-through phonics curriculum. The books that pupils read are closely matched to their knowledge of phonics. Pupils practise their reading frequently. Pupils who find learning to read more difficult, including those pupils who speak English as an additional language, benefit from appropriate support. They quickly become fluent

readers. Pupils in key stage 2 enjoy reading. They spoke confidently about their favourite authors and how these authors use vocabulary well to captivate the reader.

Teachers regularly check what pupils know using a variety of well-considered strategies. Leaders use this assessment information to help them to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders and staff have adapted the curriculum effectively to help pupils to learn the essential knowledge that they may have missed during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Leaders pride themselves on the fact that everyone is included in all aspects of school life. They use well-established procedures to swiftly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND get the support that they need to succeed in their learning and wider development.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They focus on their learning in lessons free from disturbance. Pupils engage eagerly in discussions and debates about their learning. Parents and carers are positive about the work of the school and the support that they receive. For example, parents appreciate the help that they receive to access external agencies for additional guidance and support.

Leaders have carefully considered the needs of the pupils and placed personal development at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils benefit from a well-considered and extensive programme of activities that are carefully woven throughout all aspects of school life. Activities such as cultural visits and charitable actions ensure that pupils develop as empathetic and tolerant youngsters who are well prepared to take their place in modern Britain. The annual residential trip for Year 6 and the 'Passport for Life' activities for all help to develop pupils' self-confidence and resilience. Pupils from all year groups have opportunities to develop their leadership skills by taking on one of the many responsibilities available in the school.

Governors know the school well. This helps them to hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions to improve the school further.

Staff are extremely proud to work at the school. They are committed to providing only the best education for pupils. Staff very much appreciate how leaders carefully consider workload when planning additional actions to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Frequent training ensures that leaders and staff have up-to-date knowledge of what to look for to ensure that pupils are safe from harm. Staff use well-established systems to share any concerns that they might have about a pupil's safety. Leaders regularly analyse the information that they receive to help them spot any emerging concerns. They work effectively with other agencies to help protect pupils.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, particularly while using the internet. This is because leaders have designed a curriculum that promotes online safety effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the order in which some key knowledge should be taught is unclear. This means that pupils are not able to build well enough on what they know. They struggle to link their previous learning to more complex concepts. Leaders should ensure that all subject curriculums clearly show what should be taught and when this should happen.
- Some subject leaders are new to their role. This means that they lack experience and knowledge in leading and monitoring the impact of their subjects' curriculums. Senior leaders should ensure that all subject leaders have the knowledge and skills to evaluate the impact of the subject curriculums effectively.

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	119439
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10211969
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Mason
Headteacher	Jacquelyn Young
Website	ststephenscofeblackburn.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has dealt with some considerable challenges that have resulted in periods of long-term absence for some staff.
- School leaders do not make use of any alternative education provision.
- The school was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in November 2019.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils about their work and school life. Inspectors spoke with the chair of the governing body and another governor. Inspectors also spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, including the

deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the school inclusion manager, who is also the school's special educational needs coordinator.

- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and the Diocese of Blackburn.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and computing. For each deep dive, an inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and spoke with some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also met with the leaders of a range of other subjects to consider the curriculum and pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation related to the work of the school and scrutinised documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Aleksandra Hartshorne

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