

Inspection of St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School, Whitefield

Ribble Drive, Whitefield, Manchester, Lancashire M45 8NJ

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences of school life vary considerably. While some pupils manage well and enjoy school, many do not.

Pupils do not receive the quality of education that they deserve. The curriculum is weak. Pupils do not achieve well because leaders do not have high enough expectations of them. This is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Most pupils are polite and behave well. They said that behaviour has improved recently. They have also noticed that leaders deal with bullying more effectively than they did previously. Even so, some pupils do use harmful name calling because they do not respect the differences between themselves and others. Although most pupils said that they feel safe, the poor behaviour that they have witnessed in the past makes them feel ill at ease.

Pupils said that staff are kind and caring. They said that most staff will act quickly to sort out any problems. However, some pupils do not feel that all staff take their concerns seriously. Many parents and carers echo their children's views.

In their roles such as school councillors, pupils learn how to contribute to their school and community. Pupils learn about the importance of physical and mental health. Some pupils enjoy taking part in the sports clubs on offer or singing in the choir.

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

The pupils who attend this school, particularly pupils with SEND, have been failed by deep-rooted weaknesses in leadership. Leaders and governors have done too little to tackle the considerable shortcomings of the school.

Pupils and children do not benefit from a well-thought-out and ambitious curriculum. In many subjects, leaders have not decided on the important content that pupils need to know and remember. Many subject leaders are new to their role. They have not had the support or training that they need to ensure that pupils study a worthwhile curriculum.

Teachers are working in the dark. They lack the guidance and subject knowledge that they need to design learning that builds pupils' knowledge over time. They are unsure how to check that pupils' knowledge is secure before they introduce new ideas. Consequently, pupils do not learn suitable subject content in the right order. The lack of clarity about what should be taught has the most damaging effect on the pupils who need the most help, including pupils with SEND. In many subjects, pupils do not achieve well.

In one or two subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is further along. They have identified the important content that pupils should learn and ordered it logically. However, teachers do not receive sufficient guidance from subject leaders to deliver these curriculums effectively.

The curriculum for early reading lacks coherence. Different teachers use different programmes to deliver phonics lessons. This inconsistency leads to confusion for pupils. Some pupils are put off reading because the books that they are given to practise their phonics knowledge are too difficult. This affects their confidence. Too few pupils read fluently and accurately by the end of key stage 1. Many older pupils lack interest and enjoyment in reading.

In the early years, leaders' expectations are not high enough. The curriculum provides little opportunity for children to develop their understanding across all areas of learning. The activities that staff design do not hold children's interest. Staff lack the expertise that they need to improve children's spoken language and vocabulary. As a result, children in the Reception class are not prepared for Year 1.

Although most pupils behave well, some staff do not intervene quickly enough to nip minor issues in the bud. This can lead to lessons being disrupted. Pupils who are more resilient and able to concentrate more easily, bear these interruptions better. These disruptions have less impact on their learning. However, this is not true for some other pupils who find it difficult to remain focused and give learning their full attention. Recently, staff have been trained to understand and manage pupils' behaviour more effectively. This is beginning to bear fruit, but this work is in its infancy.

Until very recently, staff have not had the training that they need to either identify or to cater for pupils with SEND. These pupils are sometimes left to their own devices in class. At other times, they wander the school under the supervision of staff who are ill-equipped to support them. The needs of pupils with SEND are not being met. This has led to some pupils' behaviour deteriorating to such an extent that serious incidents have occurred. This has resulted in a high number of exclusions of pupils with SEND over the past few years.

Pupils' awareness of the wider world is patchy. They learn about the harm caused by racism but their knowledge of other cultures and religions is limited. Pupils do not have a secure understanding or respect for the differences between people. At times, this leads to hurtful name calling. It also hinders pupils' readiness for life in modern Britain.

Governance is ineffective. Leaders and governors have too positive a view of the school. They rely too much on the end of key stage 2 results to support their evaluation of the school's effectiveness. This viewpoint disguises the serious flaws in the curriculum and pupils' achievement over time, starting from the early years.

Members of the recently re-structured interim leadership team, with considerable support from the local authority and the diocese, have taken effective action to

tackle some areas of weakness. As a result, there have been some improvements in pupils' behaviour and in the support for pupils with SEND. However, leaders' capacity to improve the school further is fragile. Currently, leaders are overly reliant on the support of the local authority.

Many parents are dissatisfied with the school. Staff feel that their workload is considered but are concerned about how well leaders support them to manage pupils' behaviour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training, so they can recognise the signs that could indicate that a pupil may be at risk of, or is suffering from, harm.

Leaders work with a range of agencies to ensure that vulnerable children and their families can access appropriate support when required.

Pupils have opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes pupils learning about road safety, the consequences of anti-social behaviour in the community and some of the features of healthy relationships, such as consent.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. Their expectations of pupils in Years 1 to 6 and children in the early years are too low. This hinders teachers when designing learning for pupils and prevents pupils from achieving well. Leaders should ensure that the subject curriculums clearly set out what pupils should know and remember from the early years to Year 6.
- Teachers have received too little guidance on how to deliver a suitable curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge over time. This is also true for children in the early years. Teachers lack the subject knowledge that they need to teach the national curriculum effectively. Leaders must ensure that teachers receive the training that they need to implement the curriculum well and enable children and pupils to deepen their knowledge and develop their understanding over time.
- Leaders have not decided upon a coherent early reading curriculum. There is a lack of clarity in the expectations of what pupils need to learn and by when. Leaders must put in place a clear curriculum for the teaching of phonics and early reading. They should ensure that staff are trained to deliver it consistently well and check that pupils are making progress as intended.
- Until very recently, leaders have not ensured that staff are trained to identify or to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, many pupils with SEND struggle with their learning. Leaders should ensure that staff build on their recent training so that they understand their responsibilities to meet the needs of pupils with

SEND. Leaders should also ensure that staff are trained to adapt the delivery of the curriculum, so that pupils with SEND achieve well.

- Over time, leaders have not ensured that staff are trained well to manage pupils' behaviour effectively, especially the behaviour of pupils with SEND. This has resulted in regular disruptions to pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that behaviour expectations are communicated clearly to staff, pupils and parents. They should continue to provide staff with the training they need to deal with behaviour effectively.
- Pupils do not gain enough understanding of the diverse world in which they live. They do not understand the importance of tolerance and respect of others. This sometimes leads to harmful name calling. Leaders must ensure that the programme to promote pupils' personal development prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Governors have too optimistic a view of the school's effectiveness. The interim senior leadership arrangements are temporary and many subject leaders are new to their roles. Leaders rely heavily on external support for improvement. Consequently, the capacity to improve the school is poor. Governors and leaders must take urgent action to strengthen the capacity of leaders and improve the effectiveness of governance in order to tackle the deep-rooted weaknesses at the school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	105348
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10243396
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	Colette Pritchard and Benjamin Imafidon
Headteacher	Shauna Bowes
Website	www.st-michaels.bury.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 – 11 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to the senior leadership team. This includes the appointment of an interim headteacher, an acting deputy headteacher and two acting assistant headteachers. There have also been several changes to the governing body, including the appointment of two interim co-chairs of governors.
- The substantive headteacher was on maternity leave during the inspection period.
- Leaders make use of one registered provider.
- The school is voluntary aided and part of the Diocese of Salford.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in November 2015.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons

responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has 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.
- Inspectors held discussions with the interim headteacher and other leaders. They also spoke with subject leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors spoke with four members of the governing body, including the interim co-chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with three representatives of the local authority and a member of the Diocese of Salford.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during playtimes and lunchtimes and around the school. They spoke with different groups of pupils to discuss their views of the school, their learning, their behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed documentation, checked attendance information and spoke to leaders, governors, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also considered aspects of a number of other subjects on the school's curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and considered their views shared through Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments received via the free-text facility. They also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation shared by school leaders, including the school development plan, the minutes taken at governors' meetings and leaders' self-evaluation document.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joan Grant

Ofsted Inspector

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