

Inspection of a good school: St John's Catholic Primary School, Skelmersdale

Flamstead, Birch Green, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 6PF

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 July 2022

Outcome

St John's Catholic Primary School, Skelmersdale continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils thrive because they are determined to succeed and staff have high expectations of their achievement and behaviour. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and children in the early years, achieve well in many subjects.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are confident that they can talk to any member of staff if they have any concerns. Pupils know that should bullying happen, it will be dealt with immediately. Parents and carers are happy with their children's progress. Typically, they describe staff as supportive and caring.

Pupils treat others with dignity and respect. They behave well. They learn about fundamental British values, including the rule of law and individual liberty. Pupils celebrate cultural and religious diversity.

Pupils live up to the school motto, 'to live in love'. They develop their leadership skills as librarians and members of the school council and pupil parliament.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of achievements to treasure, which include visits to beaches, churches, a zoo, libraires, a farm and museums. They are especially keen on honing their yoga and baking skills in after-school clubs. Year 6 pupils enjoy their annual residential retreat, where they develop skills such as orienteering.

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

Leaders and governors have developed an ambitious and logically ordered curriculum. This helps pupils, including those with SEND, to acquire and develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. Leaders provide pupils with experiences that enliven the curriculum and help to build pupils' cultural capital.

In most subjects, teachers carry out regular checks to find out how well pupils, including children in the early years, are learning. However, in a few subjects, teachers' checks on

pupils' learning are not as effective as they should be. In these subjects, some pupils are not remembering knowledge as securely as they should.

Staff quickly and effectively identify pupils with SEND. Leaders work closely with different agencies and parents to make sure that pupils with SEND get the specialist support that they need. The curriculum is organised so that SEND pupils do not miss out on any aspect of learning. As a result, pupils with SEND develop their knowledge and skills well.

Pupils and staff are passionate about reading, which is prioritised throughout the school. Different initiatives generate an excitement about reading. For example, pupils are encouraged to take the hundred book challenge, which helps to broaden their knowledge of different authors and poets.

The school's phonics and early reading curriculum is delivered effectively by well-trained staff. Phonics is taught from the start of the Reception Year. Children in the Nursey class learn to sound-out and read simple words. In the provision for two-year-olds, children learn nursery rhymes and listen to popular stories every day. Older pupils who need support to read well are identified quickly. They continue to receive effective support for as long as required. This means that most pupils become confident, fluent readers.

Pupils, and children in the early years, have positive attitudes to learning. They know the school rules and adhere to them. As a result, the school is a very calm and purposeful place where pupils can learn effectively. Pupils enjoy sharing their ideas in class. They follow instructions closely and respect each other's views. Children in the early years listen to staff carefully. Their inquisitiveness and thirst for knowledge enhances their understanding of the world around them.

Leaders provide a rich and varied personal development curriculum, which includes many opportunities for pupils to develop into active and considerate citizens. For example, pupils raise funds for different charities and a local foodbank. They recently supported an appeal to help people in Ukraine. Pupils learn how to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle. Older pupils are knowledgeable about current affairs and managing money. A mental health week raises pupils' awareness of the importance of mental well-being.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They are committed to the school's values. Staff told the inspector that leaders are approachable and considerate of their mental health, well-being and workload.

Governors challenge and support leaders in equal measure. They have a detailed understanding of how well pupils are performing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that stringent safeguarding procedures are in place. Staff are trained well. They quickly refer their concerns to other agencies if they are concerned that a pupil may be at risk of harm.

Staff are familiar with the government's latest guidelines on keeping pupils safe in education. Highly trained safeguarding leaders make sure that staff are kept up to date on matters relating to pupils' safety. Leaders work with different partners to make sure that pupils get the support that they need.

Staff help pupils to learn how to stay safe. For example, pupils learn about internet and fire safety and the potential dangers of rivers and waterways.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders' checks on pupils' learning do not provide sufficient information about pupils' missing or forgotten knowledge. This hinders teachers' ability to help pupils to learn this knowledge and build new knowledge securely. Leaders should ensure that checks better enable teachers to identify pupils' missed or forgotten learning so that they can help pupils to learn this knowledge and build more effectively on what pupils already know.

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 April 2012.

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	119586
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10226134
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	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter O'Dowd
Headteacher	Angela Aspinwall-Livesey
Website	www.st-johnsrc.com
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- The school has on-site provision for two-year-olds.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are the executive head and deputy headteacher of this school and another local school.
- The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school. The last section 48 inspection was carried out in November 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school has 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 of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. He also held meetings with other leaders, including those responsible for pupils' personal and social development and SEND. The inspector held a meeting with governors, including the chair of the governing body. He held a telephone conversation with the school's education consultant.

- The inspector carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector met with pupils to discuss their learning in some other subjects. He also spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector spoke with parents to gather their views about the school. He considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, and reviewed the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector spoke to safeguarding leaders about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents. He also talked with pupils about their safety and welfare. The inspector examined a range of policies and documents. He also scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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