

Inspection of a good school: St Aidan's CofE Primary School Billinge

Off London Fields, Billinge, Wigan, Lancashire WN5 7LS

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including children in the early years, are happy and safe. They told the inspector that they enjoy their time at St Aidan's. Pupils are caring and considerate of others. They explained that they enjoy socialising with their friends in the school's breakfast club.

Pupils have strong bonds with staff. They said that they feel confident to talk to any adult if they are anxious or worried. If bullying happens, it is dealt with immediately. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour.

Pupils, and children in the early years, enjoy visits to local places of interest, such as Billinge Hill. They equally love trips to the pantomime, to Liverpool Cathedral and to a range of museums and libraries.

Pupils are compassionate. They send letters and cards to residents in the local care home and enjoy participating in Remembrance Day walks. Pupils are active citizens. They lead assemblies and church services. They raise funds for different causes. The school choir, the Beacon Singers, performs regularly in the community and at regional events.

Teachers expect pupils to achieve well. However, pupils' achievement is uneven across the curriculum. This is because teachers do not know how well pupils are learning in some subjects. Added to this, pupils, including children in the early years, do not benefit from a sufficiently well-planned reading curriculum.

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

Senior leaders, staff and governors have successfully navigated the school community through some very difficult events in recent times. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are new to post. However, they are long-serving members of staff and know

the school well. The new leadership team, alongside governors, are well placed to move the school forward for pupils. They also have the support of parents and carers. Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils, and children in the early years, benefit from a consistently strong quality of education. However, it is too early to see the impact of this vision.

Leaders are devising a coherent curriculum. This includes for children in the early years. In some subjects, they have thought carefully about what they want pupils and children to learn and by when. In these subjects, teachers are selecting appropriate activities to help pupils to learn new information. However, this work is incomplete. In several subjects, leaders have not fully identified what pupils must know and remember. This impacts on how some pupils learn new knowledge.

In some subjects, teachers use leaders' assessment systems well to check that pupils can recall important learning. However, this is not the case across the curriculum. This is because, in several subjects, leaders have only recently developed new ways of checking how well pupils are acquiring the knowledge and the skills that they must learn. These revised systems for assessment have not been fully implemented. Consequently, leaders and teachers do not know exactly how well pupils are learning in these subjects. They are not able to identify accurately that some pupils do not remember important elements of their prior learning.

The new leadership team is prioritising reading. However, there are weaknesses in the current early reading curriculum. For example, leaders are currently in the process of deciding the best ways to organise the teaching of phonics. Added to this, some staff have not had the training that they need to deliver the phonics curriculum well. As a result, some pupils in key stage 1 are not learning to read as quickly as they should.

Nevertheless, pupils told the inspector that they love to read. Pupils respond well to teachers' strategies and initiatives which aim to encourage them to read widely and often. Most pupils who find reading more difficult are well supported. Catch-up sessions and small-group activities help pupils, and children in the early years, to sound out letters clearly and to improve their reading knowledge.

Leaders are careful to ensure that pupils, and children in the early years, with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly and accurately. Leaders and staff work closely with parents and, when necessary, with a range of external professionals to support pupils with SEND. This helps to ensure that these pupils get the support that they need to learn the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They compete to appear on the top of the school's behaviour rainbow, for which they receive a golden star from the headteacher and have their name written in the purple book. Pupils' attentiveness means that lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Children in the early years learn routines quickly. They are cooperative and follow instructions closely. Two-year-old children settle into the Nursery exceptionally well. They are well looked after and happy.

Pupils enjoy taking part in the wide range of enrichment activities on offer. Special events help to raise pupils' awareness of diversity. For example, pupils learn about people's disabilities and cultural and religious differences. Pupils are encouraged to pursue their interests in baking and camping. They hone their musical skills, playing different percussion, string and keyboard instruments. Pupils develop their team-working skills and talents in various after-school clubs. These clubs include dance, drama, multisports and rugby clubs. Older pupils enhance their leadership skills well in different ambassadorial roles.

Most staff are of the view that leaders are mindful of their well-being and workload. Governors support leaders and teachers well. They are working closely with leaders to improve the quality of the curriculum. Most parents who spoke with the inspector were positive about St Aidan's.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know families and the local community well. They are highly vigilant when it comes to pupils' safety. Staff receive comprehensive safeguarding training from external specialists and the school's safeguarding leaders. They are familiar with the government's latest guidelines on keeping pupils safe in education.

Staff are conversant with the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. They know how to report concerns about pupils' and children's welfare and safety promptly. Should it be necessary, leaders work with external organisations to make sure that pupils get the help that they need in a timely manner. Pupils learn about safe and healthy relationships through different aspects of the curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The early reading curriculum, including the phonics programme, is not sufficiently well planned, well organised and well delivered. Pupils, and children in the Reception Year, are not developing their phonics skills and knowledge as quickly and securely as they should be. Leaders should ensure that a coherent and well-sequenced phonics curriculum is in place. They should also make sure that staff have the necessary skills and expertise to teach the early reading curriculum.
- The curriculum has not been finalised. In some subjects, leaders have not established exactly what pupils should learn and by when. This hinders how well some pupils, and

children in the early years, acquire new knowledge and skills. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking to ensure that all staff know what to teach and when across all subjects.

- In several curriculum areas, leaders' systems for assessing what pupils know and can do are new or in development. As a result, in some subjects, teachers do not have enough understanding of how well pupils are learning new concepts and topics. Leaders should make sure that they finalise their assessment systems. They should ensure that teachers are trained to use these new assessment systems consistently well. This is so that teachers gain a better understanding of how well pupils are learning the content of the curriculum.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 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.

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	104798
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10226150
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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Corkill
Headteacher	Rachel Fisher
Website	www.billingestaidans.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- The school provides for a small number of two-year-old children.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection was carried out on 7 March 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. He also held meetings with other leaders, including those responsible for SEND, the early years, pupils' attendance and behaviour, pupils' welfare and pupils' personal development.
- The inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body.

- The inspector carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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 held a telephone conversation with a representative of the Liverpool Diocese. He also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector met with pupils to discuss their learning in some other subjects. He spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector met with parents and reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View and free-text comments from parents. He reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector examined a range of policies and documents. He also scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy. 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.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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