

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Balderstone

Oldham Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL11 2HB

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2022

Outcome

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Balderstone continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and children in the early years, are well cared for, safe and happy. Staff warmly welcome them into school each day. Pupils arrive at school excited and ready to learn. Staff know pupils well and have positive relationships with them. Pupils said that there is always someone to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Although pupils sometimes fall out with their friends, bullying is rare. They are confident that when bullying does occur, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Children in the Reception class settle quickly. They delight in the opportunity to learn alongside their friends, especially outdoors. Pupils behave well in and out of classrooms. This is because teachers have high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves. Pupils are courteous and polite. They are rewarded for their positive behaviour and helpful deeds.

Pupils and children benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum. They strive to achieve well. Many pupils achieve the high standards that leaders expect of them. The culture of learning is strong.

Pupils value the wide variety of trips, clubs and leadership opportunities available to them. School council members lead extensive charity and community work. Most parents and carers would recommend the school to others.

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

Leaders have designed an appropriately ambitious curriculum that is carefully thought out. The curriculum sparks pupils' interests. Leaders have made sure that pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects. This prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Leaders are clear about the knowledge that pupils, and children in the early years, should learn and when this content should be taught. Teachers are confident about how to design learning that supports pupils and children to build securely on what they know already. Teachers use assessment strategies well to check that pupils and children understand and remember new learning. They use this information effectively to identify knowledge that pupils and children may have missed or forgotten.

Leaders have transformed the reading curriculum. They have introduced a well-ordered phonics programme. Teachers deliver this programme consistently well. They introduce new sounds in a way that helps children in the Reception class to master the basics of reading quickly and securely. Leaders have invested in new books that closely match the sounds that children and pupils have learned. This helps pupils to develop confidence and competence in their reading.

Staff regularly check the progress that children and pupils are making with their reading knowledge. Highly skilled staff support pupils who are struggling to read so that they can keep up with their classmates. Consequently, by the end of key stage 2, most pupils learn to read accurately and fluently. Many parents value the communication from leaders about how they can best support their children with reading. Older pupils demonstrate a passion for reading. They have access to a range of high-quality books. Pupils read often. They also enjoy the stories that their teachers read to them.

From their first days in the Reception class, children learn the importance of behaving well and working hard. They learn how to share and how to take turns. Pupils across the school show high levels of respect towards each other and to staff. Any disruption to pupils' learning is rare. Pupils are highly motivated to achieve well.

Pupils contribute fully to the life of the school. They learn how to be responsible and active citizens. For example, the school council plays a key role in ensuring that pupils' voices are heard. Pupils have a strong understanding of diversity. They respect other cultures, faiths and beliefs. Pupils are tolerant and value the importance of everyone being treated equally. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders identify pupils' and children's additional needs in a timely manner. Staff support pupils and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively to access the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates. However, some pupils with SEND who do not attend school regularly have gaps in their learning. These pupils do not learn as well as they should.

Leaders and governors are committed to providing a high quality of education for all pupils. Governors understand their roles and carry them out effectively. Staff appreciate leaders' support for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have effective systems in place to record and monitor any concerns that staff might have about a pupil's well-being or safety. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know how to respond if they have any concerns that a pupil may be a risk of harm. Leaders follow up these concerns diligently.

Leaders work well with a range of external agencies. This enables them to ensure that pupils and their families receive appropriate, timely support.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils with SEND are frequently absent from school. They have gaps in their learning that affect how well these pupils progress through the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers are equipped to identify and remedy the gaps in learning for these pupils so that they can learn as well as their peers.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 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.

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	105804
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10240517
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie Clarke
Headteacher	Joanne Brown
Website	www.stmarysce.rochdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed in March 2022.
- This school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2018.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 this inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. They also spoke with a range of staff.
- An inspector met with governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector spoke with parents and carers at the beginning of the school day.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted’s online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors examined a range of safeguarding documentation. They checked leaders’ procedures for recruiting staff. Inspectors checked records of staff’s safeguarding training. They spoke with staff to check how well they understood safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour at playtimes, in lessons and around school. They also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and physical education. They met with subject leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at examples of their work. They also observed pupils reading to trusted adults.

Inspection team

David Hampson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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