

Inspection of St Alban's Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Trinity Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 5BN

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and children at St Alban's Roman Catholic Primary School are happy in school. They get on well together and make lots of friends. Pupils benefit from positive and supportive relationships with staff. Pupils say that staff are kind and helpful. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils, including children in the early years, learn that everyone should be treated with respect regardless of their differences. They try hard to live out the school's motto of 'we love together, hope together and learn together'. No one is left out. On the very rare occasions on which bullying occurs, it is dealt with effectively by staff and leaders.

Pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), live up to leaders' high expectations of their behaviour, both in lessons and when playing outside. The atmosphere in the school is calm and supportive. However, leaders and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can and should achieve in some subjects, including in reading.

Pupils learn how to make a positive difference in their school and their community by carrying out important roles, such as school councillors in the A team, eco-councillors or collective worship officers in the gift team. Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs on offer in order to pursue their talents and interests, including sports and the arts.

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

Leaders have ensured that all pupils, including pupils with SEND, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. However, leaders are still adapting some subject curriculums. Leaders have not considered fully the small blocks of knowledge that pupils should learn in these subjects, including for children in the early years. This means that teachers are less certain about the knowledge that should be taught. As a result, over time, some gaps emerge in pupils' learning.

In most subjects, teachers plan interesting lessons which hold pupils' attention. Pupils are keen to meet teachers' expectations. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present information clearly. Teachers plan lessons that prioritise the development of pupils' vocabulary. This helps those who speak English as an additional language to communicate effectively. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' work to see how well they are developing their knowledge and understanding. They use this information to address pupils' misconceptions and inform teaching.

Leaders are helping pupils to develop a love of reading. In the early years, children are supported well to make a positive start to their school life. Staff help younger children to listen carefully. This ensures that most children are ready to learn sounds

and letters as soon as they start in the Reception class. More recently, leaders have changed the school's phonics programme with the aim of ensuring that more pupils become accurate and fluent readers as quickly as they should. Leaders have provided training for staff to deliver this new programme. However, some staff are still getting to grips with how best to implement this new scheme in the classroom. In addition, not all staff ensure that the books pupils read match the sounds that pupils know well enough. Some pupils struggle to read unfamiliar books as they are too hard. This means that pupils who fall behind with their reading do not catch up quickly enough. Consequently, not enough pupils become accurate and fluent readers by the end of Year 2.

Leaders ensure that the school is inclusive. Teachers are supported well to identify pupils' needs and to adapt teaching and resources so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. Leaders ensure that those pupils who need specialist support from external agencies get the help that they need. Pupils with SEND achieve well in most subjects.

Children settle quickly into the early years class. Staff have worked hard to develop positive relationships with parents through an open-door policy. Children listen well, work happily together and enjoy learning new things. They are keen to share their achievements with others. Across the school, pupils concentrate well in their lessons. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave respectfully. This means that learning is not disturbed by low-level disruption.

The provision for pupils' personal development is strong. Leaders make sure that children in the early years have opportunities to develop their social and emotional skills. Staff support pupils in building on this firm foundation as they progress through the school. Pupils are taught about the skills they need for life, like how to get on well with each other and be healthy. Pupils are encouraged to express their ideas and opinions, and staff take the time to listen to their views. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about the world beyond their school. They show a keen interest in learning about different beliefs and cultures. As a result, they understand how they can make a positive contribution to their school and wider community.

Governors are committed and dedicated to their role. They are proud to serve the school community. They have supported school leaders to navigate a particularly challenging period for the school. However, members of the governing body have not kept a close enough check on the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know their local community well. They understand the challenges that their pupils face. As a result, leaders make sure staff receive appropriate training to identify pupils who are at risk of harm. Staff are vigilant and are quick to report any concerns they have about pupils. Leaders act swiftly on these concerns. They work

effectively with a range of external agencies to ensure that these pupils are kept as safe as possible.

Leaders have made sure that there are a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn about healthy relationships and how to stay safe. For example, pupils are provided with detailed guidance about how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have an overly positive view of the effectiveness of the curriculum for early reading. They have not ensured that the new phonics programme has been implemented effectively. Some staff are still honing their expertise in delivering this programme. As a result, not enough pupils learn to read accurately and fluently by the end of Year 2. Leaders should ensure that there is a systematic approach to teaching phonics and that staff are supported to deliver the phonics programme consistently well, including providing the expert additional support that some pupils need to catch up quickly. This will ensure that a greater number of pupils become accurate and fluent and confident readers by the end of Year 2.
- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not carefully identified the most important knowledge that pupils should learn or the order in which it should be taught. This includes the curriculum in the early years. This means that in some subjects teachers are not as clear as they might be as to the knowledge that pupils need to acquire and by when, leading to in gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that all subject curriculums are well thought out, so that pupils get to learn and remember all that they need to.
- Members of the governing body are not well informed about the quality of education that pupils receive. This means that they are unable to hold leaders to account as well as they should about how well pupils achieve. Governors should ensure that they have the information that they need to hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement across the curriculum.

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	119706
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10240224
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	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Edward Baker
Headteacher	Claire Speakman
Website	www.stalbansrcprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 September 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been considerable changes to staffing over recent years.
- Leaders do not currently make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- 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 graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and the chair of the governing body. They also spoke with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. These involved visiting lessons with subject leaders, discussing the subject curriculums, talking to pupils and teachers and looking at pupils' work. They also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors held discussions with the subject leaders for science and art.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes, lunchtime and during lessons. Inspectors also talked to pupils about their views of the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and spoke with parents. They also considered responses to the staff questionnaires and talked to staff about their views of the school.
- The inspectors checked leaders' safeguarding procedures. This included the school's central record of staff and visitors, staff training records, records of safeguarding and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.

Inspection team

James Blackwell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Blay	Ofsted Inspector

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