

Inspection of a good school: St James' Church of England Primary School Blackburn

Earl Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 8EG

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2022

Outcome

St James' Church of England Primary School Blackburn continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including children in the early years, enjoy being part of a friendly learning community and they are happy at school. Staff greet pupils with a warm welcome as they arrive each morning. Pupils are helped to feel safe because of their friends and the trusting relationships that they have with staff.

Leaders ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive the help that they need to access an ambitious curriculum. The curriculum for two-year-old children, and those children in the early years, is equally ambitious. Leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils typically try their best. As a result, most pupils achieve well. Children in the early years are well prepared for the demands of Year 1.

Leaders expect pupils to behave well. Pupils move calmly and sensibly around the school. Children in the early years understand school routines. For example, they know when it is time to work and when to stop and listen. The pupils who spoke with inspectors understood the impact of bullying others. They said that their teachers would act quickly to resolve any bullying, should it ever occur.

Pupils know that everyone has differences and similarities. Older pupils enjoy supporting others, for example by acting as a buddy for younger children. Leaders and staff have successfully enhanced pupils' learning through a range of residential visits, trips and clubs. Pupils are proud of their school.

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

Leaders have carefully considered content of the curriculum from the early years to Year 6. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders successfully adapt the curriculum to support the many pupils who join the school mid-way through the year. For two-year-old

children, the curriculum supports the development of communication and language as well as social skills. As a result, children in the early years and pupils learn well.

Staff teach pupils new knowledge in a logical order. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to recall prior learning. This supports them to remember the important knowledge. Teachers use leaders' assessment systems well to identify and address misconceptions in pupils' learning.

Leaders foster pupils' love of reading. In the early years and in key stage 1, staff receive suitable training to deliver the phonics programme effectively. Staff ensure that all pupils, including children in early years, access any support that they may need to catch up with their reading. Children get off to a flying start with their reading in the Nursery class. They enjoy learning songs and rhymes. The books that staff select for children and pupils to practise their reading match the sounds that they know. This helps pupils to become more confident readers.

Pupils in key stage 2 spoke of how they enjoy the work of many authors. Staff teach pupils the meaning of important new words and help them to use subject-specific vocabulary. However, some older pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to practise their reading. Consequently, some pupils lose confidence and fluency in reading.

Leaders and staff are skilled at identifying the specific needs of pupils with SEND. Staff support pupils with SEND well. They ensure that pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as other pupils. They do not miss out on any aspect of learning. Teachers explain and model learning clearly. This prepares them well for new learning and helps pupils with SEND to achieve well overall.

Leaders have made sure that the curriculum provides opportunities to promote pupils' wider personal development. Pupils learn about how to stay physically and mentally healthy. Leaders provide pupils with many opportunities to learn about the wider world, including other cultures and faiths.

Children and pupils joining the school settle in quickly. They listen well, work happily together and enjoy learning. Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Leaders check on pupils' attendance closely. They make it clear to families that if pupils are not attending school, they are not benefiting from the taught curriculum. Where pupils have poor attendance, leaders challenge this appropriately. However, despite leaders' best efforts, the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school remains high.

Governors support and challenge leaders to improve the quality of education. Governors and senior leaders are mindful of staff's workload. Almost all staff report that leaders are considerate of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, and effective systems are in place to keep pupils safe. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they can identify any problems that pupils may face. Staff have the confidence that leaders will deal swiftly with any concerns that they have about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders work closely with external agencies. They are skilled in securing appropriate support for pupils and their families.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some older pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to practise their reading. As a result, some pupils lose the confidence to read with fluency. Leaders should review their approach to reading in key stage 2 to ensure that no pupil falls behind.
- Some pupils are regularly absent from school. This hinders how well they learn. Leaders should continue their work to improve the rates of attendance for those pupils who are regularly absent from school.

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 July 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	119502
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10240475
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	431
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Duckworth
Headteacher	Doug Stitcher
Website	www.stjamesceprimaryblackburn.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Blackburn. The last section 48 took place in September 2019.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- The school offers education for two-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. Further meetings were held with subject leaders, staff and pupils in the school.
- Meetings were held with the lead inspector and a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the school's governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils,

and looked at examples of pupils' work. The inspectors also spoke with other senior leaders and leaders of other subjects.

- The inspectors met with the safeguarding leader to discuss actions to keep pupils safe, and spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspectors talked with pupils about their experiences at school. They also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Julie Brown, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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