

Inspection of a good school: St Bernard's RC Primary School Manchester

Burnage Lane, Burnage, Manchester, Greater Manchester M19 1DR

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 December 2022

Outcome

St Bernard's RC Primary School Manchester continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Bernard's RC Primary School is a caring, inclusive and supportive place where all pupils can learn. Pupils feel safe and enjoy learning with their friends. Pupils feel well looked after and cared for here.

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are benefiting from leaders' raised expectations of what they can achieve. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning have been transformed by leaders. Pupils strive to meet the high standards of behaviour that leaders set.

Leaders have cultivated a kind school community where pupils are considerate of everyone's differences. Pupils have the confidence to express any concerns because staff make the time to talk to pupils. Pupils know about bullying and describe it as repeated, unkind behaviour. On the very rare occasions on which bullying occurs, it is reported and dealt with effectively.

Pupils benefit from an array of school trips and visits to help build their awareness of the wider world. For example, pupils talk enthusiastically about visits to the Imperial War Museum and the Central Library in Manchester. There has been significant investment in raising the profile of sport in the school. Pupils talk with excitement about their lunchtime sporting coaches and opportunities to visit the football stadium.

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

Leaders, including governors, know the school well. They systematically and rapidly address areas for improvement. The headteacher has focused well on developing subject leadership, despite the challenges that COVID-19 has presented. This has led to improvements in subjects such as reading and mathematics in a short space of time. Leaders have been mindful of staff workload and have taken steps to make sure that teachers feel supported.

The curriculum from Nursery to Year 6 has been carefully thought out by leaders. It is rooted in the ambition of the national curriculum and in what leaders know is best for pupils. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils. Subject leaders have identified the building blocks of knowledge that they want pupils to learn over time. Learning is logically organised and teachers implement the curriculum well. For example, teachers use clear explanations in lessons. They model tasks well, often using subject-specific vocabulary.

In most subjects, teachers are effective in spotting and addressing misconceptions in pupils' learning as they arise. In a few subjects, teachers do not check what pupils have remembered as effectively. This means that teachers are not always certain that pupils' learning is fully secure before moving on to new learning. In those few subjects, teachers do not routinely revisit key knowledge. This makes it difficult for pupils to build on their prior learning. As a result, some pupils struggle to remember what they have learned over time.

Reading has been prioritised by leaders. Teachers and teaching assistants are confident and well-trained in the teaching of phonics. From Reception to Year 3, leaders have taken a dynamic approach in grouping pupils according to their precise phonics need. Teachers ensure that pupils have reading books that match the sounds they already know. This helps pupils to develop confidence and fluency in reading. Teachers quickly identify if pupils develop gaps in their reading knowledge, including older pupils in the school. Those pupils who require additional help to read receive the support they need to help them catch up. Pupils recognise the importance of reading well. They told the inspector that they love listening to their teachers read stories.

Leaders accurately identify pupils' additional needs at the earliest opportunity. They make sure that pupils with SEND receive the help that they need to learn well. This includes putting individualised programmes in place to support them. They make certain that pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Children in the early years settle well to school life due to the efforts of caring and nurturing staff. Staff model early language and communication skills well. Talk and vocabulary development are central to everything they do. Staff help pupils to understand the importance of listening and paying attention.

Pupils understand how to behave. Adults ensure that rules are fair and consistently applied. A culture where pupils are becoming more resilient has been established. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted and pupils are happy to 'have a go'.

Pupils' personal development has a high priority in this school. Leaders support pupils' emotional and mental well-being. Pupils learn about the importance of equality, inclusion and tolerance. Pupils have respect for other faiths and cultures. They are taught about the importance of keeping healthy, both physically and mentally. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to take part in enrichment activities and the clubs on offer in the school.

Governors and leaders are acutely aware of the rapid pace of change in the school. Consequently, they are mindful of the pressures on staff and have taken steps to help

manage their workload. Staff work hard because they care deeply for the pupils and feel valued by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of vigilance. Staff are alert to the signs of abuse and harm. Leaders say they take a 'pennies in a jar' approach, meaning that all staff know that no piece of information is too small or insignificant. Leaders have ensured that there are effective systems in place for all staff to report concerns.

Staff have a very good knowledge of families and the local community. They understand the local risks that pupils may face. Staff use this knowledge to keep pupils safe. The leaders responsible for safeguarding are proactive in their approach. They work closely with external agencies, including health, social care and the police, to support and protect pupils. They ensure that the right support is in place for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Staff teach pupils how to stay safe. Pupils are aware of the risks they may face when online and how to manage them. Pupils know who they can speak to if they are feeling worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers do not check what pupils have remembered thoroughly enough. This means that teachers are not always certain that pupils' learning is fully secure before moving on to new learning. As a result, some pupils struggle to remember what they have learned in the long term. Leaders should ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding in order to uncover gaps in pupils' understanding and close them before moving on.
- Pupils struggle to remember some of the content that they have learned over time. They do not revisit key knowledge regularly. This means it is difficult for them to build on their prior learning and secure their understanding. Leaders should ensure that they introduce robust systems that help pupils remember what they have learned in the long term.

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 March 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	105541
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10226120
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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pat Jones
Headteacher	Claire Breeze
Website	www.st-bernards.manchester.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The school's section 48 inspection was carried out in December 2018.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision for pupils at the school.
- The headteacher was new to post in September 2020.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, subject leaders and other members of staff. She also spoke with members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Salford.
- The inspector spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. She also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.

- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the single central record. She met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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