

Inspection of a good school: St James-the-Less Roman Catholic Primary School, Rawtenstall

Unity Way, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 8SU

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 January 2023

Outcome

St James-the-Less Roman Catholic Primary School, Rawtenstall continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St James-the-Less are friendly and welcoming. They build strong relationships with their teachers. Pupils appreciate the care that they receive, and this helps them to feel safe.

Pupils live up to the high expectations that leaders set for their behaviour. Pupils are polite and well mannered. Pupils have a warm and respectful relationship with their peers. If bullying occurs, leaders take appropriate steps to resolve issues quickly.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including children in early years, to achieve highly. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. From early years to Year 6, they work hard and try their best. Pupils enjoy school and they are keen to attend each day. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils enjoy the various sports activities that are on offer, such as skiing and swimming. Pupils also thrive in their leadership roles. These include acting as digital leaders, sports ambassadors, school council members, Reception class buddies, mental health advocates and book buddies. This provides older pupils with the opportunity to be excellent role models for the younger pupils and children in early years.

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

Leaders have recently adopted an ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which it is taught. Leaders have provided teachers with the relevant training to ensure that they are well equipped to deliver the curriculum with expertise and confidence. As a result, pupils achieve well in most subjects.

In some subjects, teachers check pupils' learning carefully. However, in other subjects, their use of effective assessment strategies is at an early stage of development. For example, teachers do not routinely check that pupils have learned all that they should and nor do they give pupils the opportunity to revisit prior learning. In these subjects, pupils' misconceptions can sometimes go unnoticed. This hinders pupils' learning.

Leaders have made reading a priority. Children are introduced to sounds and the letters that they represent as soon as they enter the Reception class. Leaders provide all pupils with regular opportunities to read a wide range of books, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Teachers make sure that the books that pupils read are closely matched to the sounds that they have been taught. This develops pupils' fluency and confidence. Leaders check how well pupils are progressing through the phonics programme. They put effective support in place for any pupils who find reading more difficult.

Leaders identify and assess the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and effectively. Leaders ensure that teachers have the information that they need to support pupils with SEND during lessons. However, some teachers do not use this information well enough to adapt how they teach the curriculum. At times, this hinders the progress that some pupils with SEND make in learning all that they should.

Pupils behave well at social times and when moving around the school. Teachers ensure that the classroom environment is purposeful. There is very little disruption to learning. Pupils take pride in the work that they produce.

Leaders have carefully considered the opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the local and global community. Pupils learn about a wide range of cultures and religions. They celebrate different festivals throughout the year and are exposed to a variety of appropriate external speakers. Pupils are also encouraged to consider others and routinely fundraise for charitable projects. Pupils learn about relationships and receive health education in an age-appropriate manner. As a result, pupils are ready for life in modern Britain.

Governors have a vast range of skills and knowledge, which enables them to challenge and support leaders effectively. Leaders know the areas of the school that need further development. They have reviewed and streamlined the school's policies to ensure that staff's workload is managed well. Staff feel well supported and they enjoy working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that any circumstances that may lead to pupils experiencing harm are identified early and dealt with effectively. Staff and governors are well trained. They follow the correct procedures to make sure that pupils are safe. Leaders liaise well with parents and carers. Leaders also work productively with a range of external services to ensure that pupils' needs are met effectively.

Pupils are aware of the ways in which they can keep themselves safe, for example in respect of road safety and keeping safe when online. Pupils know how, when and to whom to report their concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers' use of assessment strategies is not effective in checking what pupils have learned or when pupils have misconceptions. This leads to gaps in pupils' understanding. Leaders should ensure that teachers are equipped to check that pupils' learning is secure before they are moved on to new ideas or subject content.
- Some teachers do not adapt their delivery of the curriculum well enough for pupils with SEND. This stops some pupils with SEND from learning all that they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers use the information that they hold to make sure that pupils with SEND can access the same ambitious curriculum as other pupils in the 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2013.

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	119665
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10241969
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Clare Atherton
Headteacher	Gary Hall
Website	www.stjamesthelesschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character was in November 2019.

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, senior leaders and subject leaders. The inspector also met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection. The inspector also met with representatives of the board of governors, including the chair of governors, as well as a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders and teachers, heard pupils read, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with some pupils, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.

- The inspector considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, pupil behaviour, improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation summary.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspector analysed safeguarding documentation, including the single central record. The inspector spoke with a range of pupils, staff and leaders to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The inspector spoke with the leaders responsible for pupils' wider development and behaviour.
- The inspector considered the responses of parents to Ofsted Parent View and the responses from pupils and staff to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Amina Modan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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