

# Inspection of St James' Catholic Primary School, Skelmersdale

Ashurst Road, Ashurst, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 6TN

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

There is a genuine warmth in the interactions between pupils and staff at this nurturing school. One member of staff summed this up best as the 'loving approach' that pupils and staff take towards their relationships with each other. This helps pupils to feel well cared for and happy. Pupils feel safe. They rarely fall out with their classmates. Leaders deal with any bullying concerns effectively.

Pupils meet leaders' high expectations for behaviour. Pupils engage enthusiastically in lessons and enjoy their learning. They play particularly well together at social times. For example, groups of friends take leisurely strolls around the racetrack while eating their snacks and chatting about their shared interests. Other pupils climb along the trim trail or play ball games together.

Leaders capitalise on any unique opportunities that arise to give pupils special, one-off experiences. In recent times, these have ranged from video calls with people living near the Amazon rainforest to cooking experiences at a regional restaurant.

Many pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well in many subjects.

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

Leaders have implemented an ambitious curriculum for all pupils at the school, including pupils with SEND. They have considered the important knowledge that pupils need to learn from the two-year-old Nursery class through to Year 6. In many subjects, leaders have provided teachers with effective curriculum guidance. This guidance helps teachers to teach subject content in a logical order through well-chosen activities that help pupils to build their knowledge securely. However, in some subjects, leaders have not developed the same level of guidance. In these subjects, teachers are less clear on how best to teach important knowledge. This means that teachers do not deliver some subject curriculums consistently well.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND have their additional needs identified and assessed early. Teachers use appropriate strategies to adapt their delivery of the curriculum for these pupils so that they can access the same learning as their classmates. Teachers carry out appropriate checks on pupils' learning so that they can help pupils with any misconceptions that they might have.

Pupils start to learn phonics as soon as they begin their schooling. Teachers deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Pupils enjoy their phonics lessons. They happily chant the sounds that they know as part of their reading practice. Pupils enjoy listening to the daily story time sessions across the school. They read books that match with the sounds that they know. Pupils are given additional support where necessary to catch up with their learning of sounds. However, this extra help does not get to the heart of the gaps in pupils' knowledge. The staff who lead these

sessions lack the expertise to help pupils to catch up. As a result, some pupils do not become confident, fluent readers as quickly as they should.

Children in the early years, including those in the provision for two-year-olds, quickly form positive relationships with their teachers and each other. They learn their classroom routines quickly and follow them sensibly. Most teachers in the early years model communication and language effectively. They support children's learning well when children are engaged in different activities within the classroom environment. By the end of the Reception Year, children are well prepared for key stage 1.

Pupils behave well throughout the day. Disruptions to learning are rare and, when they do happen, teachers deal with them quickly and kindly. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' attendance. However, some pupils do not attend school regularly. Leaders have only recently begun to review the actions that they take to remove any barriers that are preventing these pupils from attending school. This means that some pupils continue to miss out on important learning.

Leaders provide well for pupils' personal development. Older pupils build a secure understanding of fundamental British values. For example, they understand the concept of individual liberty and how that may sometimes come into conflict with the rule of law. Pupils also have a pupil parliament group that meets regularly to voice their opinions on school life. Pupils have opportunities to take on leadership roles and responsibilities, such as well-being ambassadors. They also have opportunities to show their sporting talents through the competitions that they can attend. The curriculum helps pupils to develop a good understanding of positive relationships, physical health and mental well-being. This helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

Governors know their roles and responsibilities well. They play an active role in the life of the school. Leaders are highly considerate of staff well-being and workload. Staff have a strong appreciation for leaders' efforts to engage with them. As a result, staff morale is high.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to recognise and report on any concerns related to pupils' welfare. Leaders take appropriate actions to manage these concerns. They involve other agencies where necessary to provide any extra support that families might need. Leaders have ensured that the school curriculum is effective in supporting pupils to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not attend school as frequently as they should. This means that these pupils miss out on some important learning. Leaders should further review the strategies that are in place to improve pupils' attendance at school.
- Some pupils do not receive effective support to help close the gaps that they have in their phonic knowledge. This means that some pupils take longer than they should to become confident, fluent readers. Leaders should review the approaches that are used to help pupils who struggle with phonics. Leaders should also ensure that staff have the necessary expertise to deliver additional reading support well.
- In some subjects, leaders have not outlined sufficiently their expectations of how teachers should deliver important knowledge. This means that teachers do not deliver some subjects consistently well. In turn, pupils do not build their knowledge securely in these subjects. Leaders are not alert to some of the inconsistencies in teachers' implementation of the curriculum. Leaders should provide clear curriculum guidance for teachers so that teachers know how best to deliver subject content.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119588
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241794
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	221
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ryan Hughes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Blacoe
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-james-pri.lancs.sch.uk">www.st-james-pri.lancs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This is a Catholic school. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in November 2018.
- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school operates its own nursery provision for two- and three-year-olds. The provision for two-year-olds has been created since the last inspection. All nursery provision at the school was considered as part of this inspection.
- The number of pupils on roll at the school has increased steadily since the last inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' and children's work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the archdiocese. Inspectors also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about safeguarding and their wider experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. They discussed safeguarding arrangements with leaders and staff. Inspectors also checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents and carers at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Deane OBE

Ofsted Inspector

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