

Inspection of a good school: St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Little Lever

Norris Street, Little Lever, Bolton, Lancashire BL3 1BQ

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2023

Outcome

St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Little Lever continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Matthew's is a caring and nurturing school. Pupils and children in the early years love coming to school. They are happy and cheerful. Pupils are very well cared for by staff. Pupils are respectful to each other and to adults.

Leaders and staff have high aspirations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils achieve well.

Pupils said that they feel safe. They know that they can tell a trusted adult if they are worried about something. On the very rare occasions on which bullying occurs, leaders deal with it effectively.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond by behaving well around the school and in lessons. They support each other well during lessons.

Pupils' talents are developed through a wide range of experiences. These include visits and trips to museums and the local library. They take part in many clubs, including arts and crafts, hockey and netball. Older pupils have opportunities to learn a range of musical instruments, such as drums, and to take part in music concerts. Members of the school choir spoke with enthusiasm about their performances at local and regional events. Pupils value the opportunity to take on responsibilities, such as being members of the school council, art council and librarians.

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

Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils, including children in the early years. They want them to develop into well-rounded individuals. Pupils follow a broad and enriched curriculum that follows the requirements of the national curriculum. Children in

the early years are well prepared for Year 1. Pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects.

Leaders have designed most subject curriculums well so that children and pupils can build their knowledge in a logical order. However, in a small number of subjects, it is less clear what knowledge pupils will learn. This hampers teachers from knowing exactly what should be taught. As a result, in these subjects, pupils do not learn some of the building blocks essential for their future learning.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to present and explain new learning to pupils clearly. They revisit prior learning so that pupils can build on their knowledge over time. Teachers check that pupils understood what they have been taught and resolve any errors or misconceptions that they may have.

Reading is promoted well throughout the school. Teachers are well trained in how to teach reading. They begin to teach phonics as soon as children start in the Reception Year. Children experience different sounds through many activities, such as listening to rhymes and singing songs. Staff make sure that reading books are closely matched to the sounds that pupils have learned. Pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to sound out unfamiliar words. They read with increasing confidence and fluency. Pupils who find reading difficult get the extra help that they need to catch up. Pupils develop a love of reading. Older pupils read widely and often. Pupils spoke excitedly about their favourite books.

Leaders identify effectively the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders work well with external agencies and families to ensure that the needs of these pupils are met. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils with SEND receive effective support in class. This is helping pupils with SEND to learn more as they move through the school. Pupils with SEND take part in all aspects of the curriculum.

Pastoral support for pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils who have difficulty in managing their emotions are well supported. Children in the early years, and pupils in the rest of the school, follow clear routines. This helps to maintain a calm and orderly atmosphere. In lessons, pupils concentrate well because lessons are rarely disrupted.

Pupils' social, emotional and mental health is a high priority to leaders. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about and develop their health and well-being. Staff deliver a carefully designed programme about healthy relationships. Pupils learn about different faiths and beliefs. This helps them to develop respect and tolerance for others.

Leaders have galvanised staff into one team. Staff enjoy working at the school and they feel valued. They reported that leaders are mindful of their workload. Leaders and governors work well together. Governors draw on their various areas of expertise to support leaders well. They hold leaders to account effectively. This is helping the school to continue to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of vigilance in the school. Staff and governors receive training in safeguarding. Staff know how to spot the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and what to do if they have concerns. Leaders are tenacious in following these up. Records are detailed. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families are well supported. Leaders know the potential risks in the local area. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online and in the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified clearly enough what knowledge they want pupils to learn. As a result, pupils do not learn some of the building blocks essential for future learning. Leaders should ensure that in these subjects, they carefully set out the knowledge that they want pupils to learn and remember.

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 October 2012.

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	105242
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10256128
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	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dave Mayor
Headteacher	Georgina Ryding
Website	www.stmll.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England primary school. It is part of the Diocese of Manchester. The most recent section 48 inspection was in March 2016.
- A new chair of governors, as well as several other new governors, have been appointed to the governing body since the last inspection.
- School leaders make use of one registered alternative provider for a very small number of pupils.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and staff. The inspector also spoke with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese.

- The inspector spoke to pupils about their experience of school life and their views on behaviour and bullying. The inspector also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation document, 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. The inspector met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school. The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of an alternative provider.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, geography and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector observed pupils reading to familiar staff.
- The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The inspector spoke with parents before the start of the school day to gather their views.
- The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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