

# Inspection of a good school: St. Theresa's RC Primary School

Whetstone Hill Road, Derker, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL1 4NA

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

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

Pupils are proud to attend St. Theresa's RC Primary School. They value the warm relationships that they develop with staff. Pupils know that their teachers have high aspirations for what they can achieve. They appreciate the support that staff give them to achieve their best. That said, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge, including in reading. As a result, their learning across the curriculum is uneven.

Pupils behave positively in lessons and around school. They wear their 'always' badges with pride to show that they are meeting their teacher's high expectations. Pupils value the help that they receive from teachers to improve their behaviour if it falls below the standard expected.

If bullying or unkind behaviour occurs, leaders take prompt action to resolve it. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe in school.

There are many opportunities for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to contribute to school life. For example, older pupils volunteer as lunchtime leaders, creating and supervising play activities for younger pupils to enjoy. Other pupils take on responsibilities for the school's charity work, such as looking after the school environment and leading their peers in acts of worship.

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

In many subjects, leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum that builds pupils' learning from the early years to Year 6. Leaders have carefully identified and ordered knowledge so that pupils can develop a growing understanding of different subjects over time. This prepares most pupils well for the next steps in their education.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. For the most part, they skilfully select activities that help pupils, including those with SEND, to learn well. Staff in the early years expertly support the development of children's language and communication skills.

In the main, teachers use assessment strategies successfully to ascertain how well pupils are learning curriculum content within topics. Many teachers quickly identify where pupils are struggling and provide additional support so that pupils can catch up quickly. However, in some subjects, teachers do not check sufficiently well that pupils know and remember more over time. As a result, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge that are not addressed by staff.

Leaders have taken judicious steps to improve the teaching of early reading. Pupils read books that closely match the sounds they know. In the early years, leaders have ensured that high-quality texts are at the heart of the curriculum. Leaders foster a love of reading in children that grows as they move through the school. However, some staff do not deliver the phonics programme consistently well. In addition, leaders have not ensured that some pupils have enough time to practise their reading knowledge. This hinders how quickly some pupils learn to read.

Classrooms are positive and welcoming learning environments for pupils. In the early years, staff help children to quickly adapt to the routines and expectations of school life. Leaders have developed a consistent system to encourage and support pupils to behave well from the Nursery class through to Year 6. As a result, pupils display positive attitudes to their learning, and any disruption is rare.

Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to learn about the British values of democracy, the rule of law and tolerance. Pupils also learn how to look after their physical and mental health, as well as how to develop healthy relationships. Pupils have many opportunities to develop into well-rounded young citizens. For example, leaders deliver assemblies that teach pupils about spirituality and compassion for children in less fortunate positions.

Leaders are ambitious for the outcomes of pupils with SEND. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained to identify and support pupils with SEND successfully. In the early years, staff liaise skilfully with leaders to identify children's emerging issues.

Governors do not have the necessary expertise to hold leaders to account sufficiently well. This is because governors are overly reliant on the information that they receive from leaders, which hinders how effectively they challenge them. While leaders have sought external support with evaluating and redesigning the curriculum, they have not been equally proactive in some other areas. This means that in some areas of the school, weaknesses have not been addressed quickly enough.

At the time of the inspection, there had been recent changes to leadership, including the appointment of a new headteacher. Many staff told the inspector that they felt supported by leaders in the school. However, some staff did not share this view. These staff told the inspector that they feel unable to approach leaders with their concerns about workload. As a result, they do not feel that leaders adequately support their workload or well-being.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. They are vigilant in looking out for the potential signs of abuse and neglect. Leaders have established an effective system for staff to record and pass on their concerns. Staff report any concerns that they have about a pupil's welfare diligently.

Leaders work closely with external agencies to secure timely help for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Leaders ensure that pupils are taught about the importance of personal safety, including online safety.

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

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

- Some staff do not deliver the phonics programme as leaders intend. As a result, some children and pupils do not develop their reading knowledge as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff are fully equipped to deliver the phonics programme consistently well.
- In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment strategies as effectively as they should to check on how well pupils remember knowledge over time. As a result, pupils' learning is uneven. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies well to identify and address pupils' gaps in knowledge.
- Some staff do not feel that they can approach leaders with concerns about their workload. This has led to these members of staff feeling that leaders do not give due consideration to their well-being. Governors should ensure that leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being when making decisions about the school.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account as effectively as they should. As a result, some weaknesses in the quality of education that pupils receive have not been identified or addressed quickly enough. Governors should ensure that they develop the necessary expertise to enable them to accurately evaluate the work of school leaders.

## 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 November 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 136825   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Oldham   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10256168   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 213  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Peter Patterson  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Linda McCombe  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.sttheresas.oldham.sch.uk">www.sttheresas.oldham.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 14 and 15 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005             |

## Information about this school

- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in January 2023.
- This school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The most recent Section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in December 2014.
- Governors provide breakfast and after-school childcare.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 met with senior leaders and a range of staff. She also spoke with members of the local governing body, as well as representatives of the local authority and the diocese and the school improvement partner.
- The inspector spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. She observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and social times.

- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records of pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. She met with leaders, staff and pupils to understand how pupils are kept safe.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, geography and mathematics. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and staff.

### **Inspection team**

Charlotte Oles, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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