

Inspection of a good school: Middleton Parish Church School

Springfield Road, Middleton, Manchester M24 5DL

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 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. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Previously, pupils have not achieved as well as they should. Leaders and staff have raised their expectations of what pupils, including children in the early years, can and should achieve now. The school's new curriculum better meets pupils' interests, aptitudes and needs. Now, pupils learn and remember the important knowledge that they are taught.

Most pupils are happy at the school. They appreciate the changes that leaders are making to improve school life, such as the new curriculum, lunchtime clubs and improvements to the early years outdoor provision. These changes are making a positive difference to pupils' day-to-day experience of school.

Pupils value the wealth of support that leaders provide. They know that adults will help them if they have any worries or concerns. They value the lunchtime 'Chill and Chat' sessions and the offer of a 'soft landing' if they struggle to cope at the start of the school day. This makes them feel safe.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They generally get on well together. Leaders do not tolerate bullying. They deal with any instances quickly and effectively.

Pupils are encouraged to help others. During the inspection, pupils dressed in bright clothes to raise awareness of autism spectrum disorder and they made donations to the local food bank. They are proud of their responsibilities in roles such as eco-councillors and school councillors.

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

There has been a decline in pupils' performance in national tests and assessments since the previous inspection. Too many pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have not had the knowledge and skills needed to be ready for their next steps. Nevertheless, leaders have recently taken the urgent actions needed to improve pupils' outcomes.

Leaders have developed a well-thought-out and well-sequenced curriculum. This new curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders have set out the important knowledge that pupils should learn in English, mathematics and across the wider curriculum subjects. They have also developed the school's early years curriculum so that these children now get off to a strong start at the school.

Leaders have provided training and support for teachers. This ensures that teachers have the expertise to teach the new subject curriculums as intended. Teachers are mindful that some pupils have wide gaps in their learning. They ensure that they identify and address these gaps. They check that pupils have the prior knowledge needed to make sense of new learning. They use this information to adapt teaching activities and devise catch-up sessions. Consequently, since the start of the school year, pupils have followed the curriculum well.

Subject leads carry out activities to reassure themselves that pupils acquire the intended knowledge and skills. They work well with teachers to review the subject curriculums and make any changes needed. This is enabling these subject leads to identify any further refinements needed as they develop and embed the new curriculums.

Children learn phonics from their earliest days in the Reception Year. Leaders have reviewed the school's phonics programme. Previously, children struggled to remember the new sounds that they learned. Teachers now spend more time introducing new sounds. They also provide more opportunities for children to consolidate new knowledge. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they have learned. Teachers help pupils who are falling behind in reading to catch up with their peers. Most pupils learn to read accurately and fluently now.

Pupils enjoy listening to the stories that adults read to them. Some pupils are inspired to read other books by the same authors or of similar genres. However, some classes do not benefit from regular story times. Some pupils do not enjoy their reading lessons and rarely choose to read by themselves for pleasure. This has a negative impact on how well these pupils understand texts and, consequently, how well they achieve in reading. Leaders have started to take actions to address this. For example, they recently developed an attractive book corner. Pupils like to visit this at lunchtime.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND. They work with external partners to assess these pupils' overall needs. Pupils with SEND have benefited from the recent changes to the school's curriculum. Teachers identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and misconceptions. However, for some of these pupils, leaders do not identify precisely enough the individual barriers to learning. In addition, teachers sometimes do not use effective strategies to

address individual learning needs. Consequently, at times, these pupils do not receive the specific support that they need to achieve well. Some parents and carers do not feel that leaders and teachers communicate well with them when there are concerns about their child.

More pupils enjoy learning now. They listen attentively to their teachers. Poor behaviour rarely disrupts lessons. Children in the early years are familiar with the well-established rules and routines. They take turns and share with their classmates. Teaching staff provide support to pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour.

Older pupils enjoy their 'Big Questions' sessions. They look forward to these wide-ranging, philosophical discussions. Pupils take part in sports clubs and represent the school in local competitions. Older pupils recently learned vital life skills and safety advice with the Fire and Rescue Service. The children in early years were fascinated to watch chicks hatching and delighted to take care of them in their first few days of life.

Since the previous inspection, there has been significant turbulence in governance. This had an impact on the effectiveness of the previous governing body during a period of considerable challenges for the school. It oversaw the decline in the school's performance as leaders struggled with the impact of COVID-19, the absence of key leaders and staff and a high turnover of staff. There is a new governing body in place, but it is too early to assess its impact.

Staff feel that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being. They support the improvements that leaders are making to the curriculum. Nevertheless, they feel that the high rates of staff absence place a considerable additional burden on the team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. This means that staff know the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff report and record any concerns meticulously. Leaders follow up these concerns assiduously. They work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families have access to the help and support that they need.

Leaders and staff make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, older pupils learn about the risks of drug and alcohol misuse. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The previous governing body did not carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively. Governors did not support and challenge school leaders sufficiently well. They oversaw a decline in the educational performance of pupils. The new governing body members should ensure that they properly discharge their statutory functions so that the school provides a high-quality education for its pupils.
- Leaders do not identify barriers to learning precisely enough for some pupils with SEND. In addition, teachers do not understand well enough how to meet some pupils' individual learning needs. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should. Leaders should sharpen their identification of the learning needs of pupils with SEND. They should also ensure that teachers know how to meet these needs in the classroom so that pupils with SEND achieve well.
- Some parents of pupils with SEND are not aware of the help and support that their child receives in school. These parents do not feel as involved as they could be in decision-making for their child. Leaders should ensure that the contribution of parents forms a valuable part of identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Older pupils do not maintain their positive attitudes to reading. This contributes to weaknesses in their comprehension skills. Consequently, pupils do not achieve well in reading at the end of key stage 2. Leaders should ensure that pupils develop as independent, fluent and enthusiastic readers who read widely, frequently and with increased understanding.

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 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 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	105821
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10268932
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	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Majerski
Headteacher	Jackie Cooke
Website	www.middletonparishce.rochdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Manchester. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in September 2016.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- The governing body operates a breakfast club and after-school provision.

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 completed deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. As part of the deep dives, she met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, met with teachers and looked at pupils' work. She observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.

- The inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. She reviewed a range of documentation and spoke to leaders and staff. She also spoke to pupils about whether they felt safe in the school.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times. She spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. She also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector spoke with parents. She considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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