

Inspection of St Silas's CofE Primary School

St Silas Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 6JP

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging at St Silas's CofE Primary School. They know that all members of the school community care greatly about them. This helps pupils to feel safe. They told inspectors that seeing their teachers makes them happy.

Pupils said that they enjoy learning. They fully understand staff's high expectations for their achievement and their behaviour. Pupils are keen to meet these expectations. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and children in the early years, achieve well.

Pupils understand fundamental British values. They talked about the differences between people in a positive and respectful way. For example, they know that some of their friends have different religious beliefs. Pupils said that everybody cares for each other. Staff act quickly to resolve any issues of bullying or unkindness.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities and visits. For example, they enjoy sports, cooking and art clubs. Pupils were excited to explain how their trips to the theatre, places of worship and museums enhance their learning. Pupils develop an awareness of why charitable endeavours, such as fundraising, are important to society. Each class chooses a charity to support.

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

Leaders have been ambitious in improving the curriculum. They have made sure that it is knowledge-rich and broad. In the main, this helps pupils to learn well. In most subjects, teachers know the precise content that pupils should learn and the order in which this should happen. However, in one or two subjects, pupils do not learn as well as they could, as leaders are yet to refine the content of the curriculum.

Teachers have the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum well. Typically, they select appropriate activities to help pupils to acquire new information and subject content. That said, in some subjects, sometimes teachers do not give pupils the time that they need to practise new learning. This occasionally hinders them from embedding their learning in the long term. Consequently, over time, some pupils develop some gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

There is a high proportion of pupils with SEND at this school. Leaders are tenacious in identifying their needs quickly and providing the targeted support that they need. Leaders and staff work closely with parents and carers, and with external professionals, to enable pupils with SEND to access the curriculum.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. This helps pupils to develop a love of reading. Teachers read to their classes daily, using carefully chosen books. Children in the early years were delighted to retell their favourite stories. Pupils visit the school library each week to choose a new book to share with their parents at

home. Older pupils were keen to talk about an exciting reading challenge, where they receive awards depending on how many books they read. By the end of Year 6, most pupils can read with accuracy and fluency.

Children begin to learn phonics at the beginning of the Reception Year. Leaders ensure that all staff access the appropriate phonics training to equip them to deliver this well. Staff provide pupils with books to read which match the sounds that they already know. Teachers provide timely support for pupils requiring additional help.

Pupils behave well across the school. Children in the early years learn routines from the start. They quickly learn to share and to take turns. Staff focus on encouraging children's self-care skills and independence. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Typically, pupils engage well and try their best in their learning. However, some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. Therefore, they do not profit from all the learning and wider experiences that other pupils benefit from.

Leaders have thought carefully about how they can best support pupils' wider development. Older pupils spoke eagerly about the leadership roles that they have, including being ambassadors for the school values and members of the school council. Pupils have opportunities to engage in debates with pupils from other schools and communities. They develop aims for their future careers, for example to be police officers, firefighters and artists. Leaders have developed an effective programme for pupils to follow that helps to build life skills. Many pupils engage well with this programme and are proud to showcase the badges that they have achieved.

Trustees work closely with the local governing committee to hold leaders to account for the education that they provide to pupils. Trustees and governors understand their roles and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Trustees, governors and leaders are mindful of staff's morale and well-being. They are proactive in reducing staff's workload. Staff feel part of the school community and know that they have the support that they need.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders regularly review the effectiveness of their safeguarding arrangements. They ensure that staff access up-to-date safeguarding training and that they have a broad understanding of safeguarding issues. Leaders and staff get to know pupils and their families well. This helps them to identify any emerging concerns as soon as they arise. Leaders work well with outside agencies to provide timely support for pupils and their families.

Pupils develop detailed knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. For example, they learn about stranger danger and know the risks that they may encounter while using social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not finalised in some subjects. Leaders have not determined the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this should happen. This hinders how well some pupils acquire new information. Leaders should refine their curriculum thinking so that staff know the exact content to teach and when this will happen.
- In one or two subjects, leaders have not made sure that teachers give pupils enough time to practise and apply what they learn. As a result, over time, pupils develop some gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders should make sure that teachers provide ample opportunities for pupils to practise new content and to embed this into their long-term memory.
- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. This means that they do not fully benefit from the learning and wider opportunities that other pupils receive. Leaders should continue to work with parents and carers to reduce the levels of persistent absence from school.

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	146541
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10267785
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	333
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Julia Anderson
Headteacher	Michele Battersby
Website	www.stsilasprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Silas's CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school in December 2018. When its predecessor school, St Silas's CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school is part of the CIDARI Academy Trust.
- School leaders do not currently make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- Leaders provide a breakfast club for pupils.
- St Silas's is a Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in April 2018.

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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and visited a sample of lessons. They spoke with teachers and with pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read with a familiar adult. He discussed reading with a group of older pupils.
- Inspectors observed how pupils behaved around the school, including at the breakfast club and during lunchtime. Inspectors sampled records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors reviewed school policies and procedures, including those relating to safeguarding. They scrutinised documentation, such as training records. Inspectors discussed safeguarding with trustees, governors, leaders and staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. They spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders of the school. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and another trustee of the CIDARI Academy Trust. He also met with members of the local governing committee, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector held meetings via telephone with representatives of the local authority and of the Archdiocese of Blackburn.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Deane	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Tonge	Ofsted Inspector

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