

Inspection of a good school: St James' Catholic Primary School

Lonsdale Road, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4AS

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 June 2023

Outcome

St James' Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils make a strong contribution to the sense of calm that exists at the school. They are kind, caring and well mannered. They respond well to the high expectations that leaders have of their achievement and conduct. Pupils are happy. Pupils said that they feel confident to speak to staff if they have any worries or concerns. Leaders deal effectively with any rare cases of bullying that occur. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils, including those that benefit from the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are fully included in the life of the school. Most pupils, including those in the early years, thrive at the school.

Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities that help them to develop their talents and interests. These include clubs such as drama, art and the aiming high club, which help pupils to become confident and resilient young people.

Pupils benefit from the trips that leaders make available to them. The trips are closely linked to the curriculum. These include a city visit to London, and a geography field trip to Coniston which helps pupils to learn about the history of the local copper mines.

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

Leaders have a clear and inclusive vision for the school. They are ambitious for the achievement of all pupils. Leaders have thought carefully about the organisation of the curriculum. For example, teachers make clear links between the key knowledge in geography, science and mathematics so that pupils develop a strong understanding of the water cycle, mountains and rivers and how to handle data. Pupils, including those in the early years, benefit from a well-designed suite of subject curriculums which prepares them well for each stage of their education.

In most subjects, leaders have clarified the key knowledge that teachers should emphasise. In these subjects, teachers design activities that help most pupils to develop

their understanding well over time. As a result, most pupils achieve well. The interactions that adults have with children in the Reception class make a strong contribution to their early development. Children in the early years are well prepared for the demands of key stage 1.

Most teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to check what pupils know and remember. They use this information well to quickly address any gaps that pupils have in their understanding. In a small number of subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is less secure. At times, this means that teachers miss opportunities to address the misconceptions that some pupils have about their learning.

Leaders ensure that children begin to learn to read as soon as they join the school in the Reception class. Staff teach the phonics programme effectively so that most pupils have the foundations to read fluently and accurately. Leaders make regular checks on pupils' phonic knowledge and they ensure that less-confident readers receive the support that they need to catch up quickly. Leaders have ensured that the books pupils read are well matched to the sounds that they learn. This helps most pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils respond well to the expectation that they should read widely and often. They benefit from the books that their teachers read to them which cover a wide range of themes such as different cultures and the importance of friendships.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. They ensure that staff receive detailed information and training about the additional needs that some pupils may have. Staff use this information effectively to design activities that help pupils with SEND, including those that benefit from the specially resourced provision, to learn well alongside their classmates.

Pupils, including those in the early years, demonstrate an inquisitive approach to their learning. Teachers deal effectively with any rare instances of low-level disruption that occur so that pupils learn without interruption.

Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils respect the differences that exist between people. They learn about how to stay physically and mentally healthy. This includes the importance of sleep and personal hygiene. Pupils know how their body changes as they grow older. They have a clear understanding of healthy relationships. Pupil mental health ambassadors take a proactive role in the school. They have purchased resources such as sensory mats, craft materials and habitats for birds and insects to support other pupils with their emotional well-being.

Governors hold school leaders to account effectively for the quality of education at the school. Staff welcome the support that they receive from leaders for their workload and well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive the training that they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff promptly report any concerns that they may have. Leaders respond to these concerns in a timely manner to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need. Leaders work effectively with other agencies when necessary.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about how to stay safe in the community through activities like cycling proficiency. Pupils also learn about how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is not as secure as it could be. As a result, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to address the misconceptions that pupils have about their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the support that they need to accurately identify and address the misconceptions that some pupils have so that these pupils achieve as well as they should.

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 January 2014.

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	112351
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10283644
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Lloyd
Headteacher	Nerissa Nicholas
Website	www.stjamesrc.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic School. The last section 48 inspection took place in November 2017. The school is part of the Diocese of Lancaster.
- The school has specially resourced provision for nine pupils with SEND, aged between four and 11. These pupils have autism spectrum disorder, severe learning difficulties and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were nine pupils on roll in the specially resourced based provision.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. The inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.

- The inspector met with school leaders to discuss reading, SEND, the curriculum, pupils' behaviour and the provision for pupils' wider development.
- The inspector held meetings with the diocesan schools' commissioner, and the general adviser from the local authority. He also met with members of the local governing body, including the chair and vice chair of governors.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff to Ofsted's online survey and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection. There were no responses to the online survey for pupils.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with leaders, staff and pupils. He checked a sample of leaders' safeguarding records and reviewed the recruitment checks made on staff.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life and their views of behaviour and bullying. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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