

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

St Mary's School, Birchley Road, Billinge, Birchley Road, Nr Wigan, Lancashire WN5
7QJ

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils strive to reflect the school's core value of respect. Everyone is made to feel welcome at the school, regardless of their differences. This helps pupils to feel happy. The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. Pupils leave the school well prepared for their next stage of education.

Most pupils behave well in school. Staff in the Reception Year ably support children to quickly learn the school rules and routines. This helps them to learn cooperatively alongside one another. Across the school, many pupils are keen to follow adult instructions. Pupils value the caring relationships that they have with staff. Pupils trust that staff will help them with any concerns. This makes pupils feel safe at school.

The school places a high priority on pupils being positive citizens. Older pupils take pride in being a 'buddy' for children in the Reception Year. They help these children settle into school life and act as positive role models. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community. For example, the school choir performs to local residents. Pupils fundraise for a range of charities. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from a broad range of enrichment opportunities.

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

The school's curriculum for English and mathematics is ambitious and taught well. Teachers check what pupils know and remember from previous lessons. They provide opportunities for pupils to revisit prior concepts when needed, before moving on to new learning. Pupils benefit from carefully constructed learning activities that build on what they already know. At the end of Year 6, pupils, including most pupils with SEND, achieve well in these subjects.

In a small number of subjects other than English and mathematics, the school curriculum does not set out in sufficient detail the key knowledge that pupils should learn from the Reception Year to the end of key stage 2. In these subjects, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has effective systems to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. However, a very small number of pupils with SEND struggle to access some learning. This is because lesson activities are not consistently adapted well to meet their needs. As a result, their learning is insecure.

Reading lies at the heart of the school's curriculum. Pupils are avid readers who develop a love of books from the Reception Year. The school ensure high-quality books form an essential part of learning for all pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic to speak about the work of different authors and poets which they have read.

The school has ensured that staff have the training needed to teach the phonics programme well. These expert staff check on what pupils know and understand and provide extra support for those who need it. This helps these pupils to keep up with their peers. The books that pupils read closely match the sounds that they have learned. This helps them to experience success when reading. The school communicates well with parents and carers on how to support their children's reading at home. Many pupils become fluent and confident readers by the end of key stage 1.

Pupils are polite and well-mannered towards members of the school community. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and during the unstructured parts of the day. Many pupils are keen to treat others in the same way that they would like to be treated themselves. When low-level disruption occurs, the majority of staff deal with it quickly.

All pupils, including those with SEND, experience an exemplary range of opportunities that enhance their personal development. Pupils develop a deep and meaningful understanding of British values, such as democracy. They pride themselves on the importance of treating everyone equally. The school ensures that pupils learn about the signs of healthy relationships. As a result, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors have a secure understanding of the school. They provide effective support and challenge linked to the quality of education. Governors place high importance on the school providing support to members of its community during times of need. Staff value being part of the school and appreciate the training that they receive to help them deliver the curriculum well. The school is considerate of staff's workload and well-being when making decisions about policies and procedures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of wider curriculum subjects, the school has not set out in sufficient detail the key knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which it should be taught. As a result, pupils do not deepen their knowledge as well as they should in these subjects. The school should finalise their curriculum thinking in these subjects.
- For a very small number of pupils with SEND, access to the curriculum is not adapted consistently well. This means that these pupils struggle to learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that suitable curriculum adaptations are in place so that pupils with SEND are able to access learning.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	104813
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10226360
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Wayne Leatherbarrow
Headteacher	Andrea Hymers
Website	www.bstm.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 June 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Catholic primary school in the Diocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection took place in November 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of 2027.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- The governing body operates a breakfast club and after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken this into account in his evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and music. As part of the deep dives, the inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, met with teachers and looked at pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum and pupils' work in some other subjects. The lead inspector observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They also considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspectors spoke with parents. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Robinson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Emily Morris

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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