

# Inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School

Alexandra Street, Newtown, Wigan, Lancashire WN5 9DS

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Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
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Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement
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The headteacher of this school is Kayleigh Ferguson. This school is part of The Wings' CE Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rachael Coulthard, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrea Atherton.

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

Pupils are happy at this school. It is a welcoming place to be. Pupils and staff have a strong sense of belonging. Staff forge strong relationships with pupils and know their families well. Pupils feel safe to talk to staff about any concerns or worries they may have.

The trust and the school have high expectations of all pupils' learning. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils try their best. They typically achieve well. Year 6 pupils are well prepared for their secondary education.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They understand the school rules, and they know that these rules are there to help them to stay safe.

Pupils appreciate the range of opportunities on offer beyond the academic curriculum. These include 'ten top opportunities' for pupils to experience before they leave school in Year 6. For example, opportunities include a visit to the seaside to feel the sand between their toes, a night at an aquarium to sleep 'under the sea' and a chance to camp out under the stars in the school grounds.

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

The trust, the local governing body and the school have worked together to revise the curriculum. They have ensured that it is well organised and enables children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 to build up their knowledge logically and securely. However, in a small number of subjects, the curriculum does not identify the essential knowledge that pupils need to know. This means that some pupils do not gain the building blocks of knowledge that are crucial to their later learning.

The curriculum is typically delivered well. However, pupils do not have enough opportunity to recap and consolidate their learning. At times, gaps in learning or misconceptions go unchecked. This sometimes makes it difficult for pupils to make connections between their existing knowledge and new learning.

Pupils' needs, interests and talents are known well at this school. There are effective systems in place to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. These pupils benefit from the support that they receive. This ensures that they can access the same curriculum as their peers.

Reading is prioritised across the school. Pupils love to read the range of books that are available. Pupils enjoy adults reading carefully chosen books to them at story times.

The proportion of Year 1 pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2022 was significantly lower than in other schools. The school

has taken appropriate action to tackle this weakness. A new early reading and phonics curriculum has recently been introduced. Most staff have received training so that they deliver the new early reading programme effectively. As a result, children in the provision for two-year-olds develop their early language well, while most children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 gain a secure knowledge of phonics. However, there is a minority of staff who are still developing their own expertise in how to best deliver the early reading and phonics curriculum. A small number of pupils are not supported to catch up in phonics as well as they could. This hinders some pupils in becoming fluent readers as quickly as they should.

Pupils' attendance has improved considerably in recent times. The majority of pupils attend school regularly. This means that many more pupils benefit from crucial learning, such as building their phonic knowledge and developing their reading fluency.

Pupils behave sensibly in lessons. Low-level disruption is rare. Most pupils, including two-years-olds and children in the early years, have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are keen to learn, and they work well together.

There are many opportunities for pupils to build their knowledge of staying safe and protecting their well-being. Pupils learn about the differences between people, for example different families and religions. They learn about important values such as respect, tolerance and democracy. These experiences prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils try hard to make a positive contribution to the school and the community. They are proud of the many leadership roles and responsibilities that they hold.

Members of the local governing body know the school well. There are effective systems in place to ensure smooth working between the local governing body and the trust. Governors have ensured that leaders have focused on improving the curriculum. Governors check that staff have the training and resources they need to do their jobs well. Trustees check that pupils across the school achieve well.

Many changes have taken place since the previous inspection. However, leaders have continued to consider the impact of these changes on staff's workload and well-being. The school communicates well with parents and carers. For example, it guides them on how to support their child's learning at home. Many parents who shared their views with inspectors said that they appreciate the care and support the school provides.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- For a few subjects in key stages 1 and 2, the school has not given sufficient thought to the essential knowledge that pupils must learn and in what order this should be taught. Some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could in these subjects. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking so that teachers know exactly what pupils must learn and when this should be taught.
- In a few subjects, pupils do not get enough chances to recap on what they have learned previously. Sometimes, gaps in their learning are not picked up well enough. This means that pupils cannot always apply what they have learned previously to new learning. The school should develop teachers' strategies to check prior learning in these subjects to ensure that pupils know more and remember more over time.
- A small number of pupils who find reading more difficult are not supported as well as they should be to catch up. This hinders these pupils from becoming confident readers. The school should ensure that staff are supported to deliver the phonics and early reading curriculum effectively so that pupils become fluent readers.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144340
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294404
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	234
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Andrea Atherton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kayleigh Ferguson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.saintmarks.wigan.sch.uk">www.saintmarks.wigan.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	14 and 15 September 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Wings' CE Trust.
- This is a Church of England primary school within the Diocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in April 2017.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- There is provision for two-year-olds.

## 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with governors and trustees, including the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the local authority and spoke with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their learning in some other areas of the curriculum and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors talked with pupils in meetings and around the school at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation, which included leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documentation relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke with some parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors also reviewed the responses to the online surveys for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

## Inspection team

Victoria Burnside, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Karen Bramwell

Ofsted Inspector

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