

Inspection of Barrowford St Thomas Church of England Primary School

Wheatley Lane Road, Barrowford, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 6QT

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 since February 2008.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this exceptional school where differences between people are valued and nurtured. Pupils feel accepted, loved and respected. They thrive in this supportive environment. Pupils are happy. They feel cared for and safe.

The school has exceptionally high expectations for all pupils across each area of the curriculum. A culture of excellence is evident. Pupils achieve highly. Children in the early years are well prepared for key stage 1, while pupils in Year 6 are more than ready for the challenges of the key stage 3 curriculum.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. This is because they know what is expected of them. Pupils relish the array of rewards that they receive for following school rules and working hard.

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the vast range of trips and the many clubs on offer. These experiences enable pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to discover exciting new interests and undiscovered talents.

Pupils excel in their various roles and responsibilities. These include head pupils, prefects and school councillors. Older pupils are proud to be 'special friends' to children in the early years. Pupils make a tangible contribution to school life through these roles. Pupils are involved in many projects in the local community, such as litter picking and designing speed awareness signs for the roads. This contributes strongly to pupils' personal development.

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

The school has developed a rich and aspirational curriculum for all pupils, including pupils with SEND. The school is clear about what pupils will learn from the moment they start in the early years through to the end of Year 6. It has meticulously identified the key knowledge that it wants pupils to know, and when this will be taught in each subject.

Pupils with SEND access the same rich and ambitious curriculum as their peers. The school accurately identifies pupils' additional needs. It ensures that pupils with SEND receive the support and wider opportunities that they need to achieve exceptionally well.

Teachers are well supported to help pupils, including children in the early years, to develop a rich body of knowledge. The school makes sure that new learning is introduced at exactly the right time. Teachers take every opportunity to recap and consolidate pupils' learning. They carefully check for any gaps in pupils' knowledge or misconceptions that they may have. Pupils are able to make connections between their existing knowledge and new learning. As a result, pupils achieve highly.

The school has ensured that reading sits at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils love to read the range of books that are available from the well-stocked library. They enjoy listening to adults enthusiastically read carefully chosen books to them at story times. The school ensures that the phonics programme is delivered effectively by well-trained staff. The books that pupils read are carefully matched to the sounds that they know. This means children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 gain secure reading knowledge. The school puts timely additional support in place for pupils who need it. Pupils quickly become fluent and confident readers as a result.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are overwhelmingly positive. Children in the early years develop strong learning behaviours. Pupils across the school build on this positive start. Pupils behave exceptionally well. This means that they can learn without any disruptions.

The school provides an exemplary range of opportunities that enhance pupils' personal development. Pupils, including pupils with SEND, have a broad and rich experience. They learn about diversity among people and families. Pupils understand the concepts of democracy, respect and tolerance. They understand that rules are there to keep them safe. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Governors use their expertise to provide the school with effective support and challenge. They are committed to the success of every pupil and check on the school's work to achieve this ambition. Staff appreciate the steps that the school takes to support their well-being and workload. They appreciate the time given by the school for them to complete any additional work. Staff feel valued and enjoy working at the school.

The school provides detailed guidance for parents and carers on how best to support their children's learning at home. For example, 'stay and play' sessions and workshops about phonics and mathematics help explain how to support learning at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	119431
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10226345
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	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Cath Ogden
Headteacher	Jo Duckworth
Website	www.st-thomas-ce12.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England voluntary aided school. It is part of the Diocese of Blackburn. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due from September 2025.
- The school does not make use of any alternative 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 received since COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the 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 other senior leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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 observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They spoke to pupils about their learning in some of these subjects and looked at samples of their 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 spoke with pupils in meetings and around the school at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents 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 reviewed the online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Victoria Burnside, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Trish Merritt

Ofsted Inspector

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