

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic Infant School

Leigh Avenue, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 6EL

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 October 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 as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since May 2008.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), flourish at St Bede's Catholic Infant School. They more than rise to meet the schools' high expectations for their academic and personal development. Pupils fully live out the school's motto of 'Learn to love; love to learn'. They achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils behave impeccably in lessons and on the playground. They enjoy spending time with their friends, and they care deeply for one another and for the wider world. Pupils have a high level of respect for adults. Pupils feel safe and they know that there is someone in school who they can go to if they have a worry.

Pupils are happy and they thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They relish the wide range of clubs and activities on offer to them, such as football, craft and drumming. These activities nurture and develop pupils' talents and interests.

Pupils excel in a considerable number of leadership roles across the school, including as digital champions, art ambassadors and school councillors. Through these roles, pupils learn in depth about how to be an active citizen. They readily share the knowledge, skills and understanding that they gain from fulfilling these roles through 'awe and wonder' days. These days forge strong links between the school's pupils and the wider local community.

Pupils, and their parents and carers, would unreservedly recommend this school to others. Pupils feel fortunate and blessed to be served by this exceptional school.

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

The early years curriculum gives children an excellent start to their education. It is extremely well designed. Indoor and outdoor areas are well organised with exciting activities that help children to develop an enquiring mind. Children's transition into school, from a variety of settings, is managed exceptionally well. Staff get to know the children as individuals. They use this knowledge to tailor activities that maximise children's engagement. As a result, children develop excellent learning behaviours, high levels of concentration and resilience. Children build seamlessly on these learning behaviours as they move into key stage 1. Children in the early years get off to a flying start.

In key stage 1, the school has also designed a highly ambitious, exciting curriculum that is rich in opportunities for pupils to put their learning into practice. Leaders have carefully selected the knowledge and skills that pupils must learn in each subject. Staff understand the curriculum exceptionally well. They receive ongoing, effective training to deliver the curriculum with proficiency. Staff regularly check what pupils have learned. They use this information promptly to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. This ensures that, in all subjects, pupils acquire a rich and deep understanding of topics and concepts that they study. Pupils, and children in the early years, shine. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Reading plays a crucial role in the curriculum and it underpins all aspects of pupils' learning. Staff deliver the phonics programme with fidelity. They make sure that the books that pupils read are carefully matched to the sounds that they know. This enables pupils to gain the secure phonics knowledge that they need to be successful readers. Pupils who fall behind with their reading knowledge are given prompt help by highly trained staff. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly.

The school has equally high expectations for pupils with SEND. Pupils' needs are quickly and accurately identified. The school has responded promptly to the complex needs of some children who join the school in the early years. Staff adapt the delivery of the curriculum, and the extra-curricular activities on offer, so that pupils with SEND can thrive alongside their peers. Equality of opportunity is at the core of the school's work. Consequently, these pupils make strong progress across the curriculum and participate fully in school life.

Pupils receive a comprehensive and well-thought-out personal development offer that is woven throughout the curriculum. Leaders, including governors, are relentless in their endeavour to develop pupils into responsible citizens of the world. There is a thorough whole-school approach to ensuring that pupils learn about healthy relationships, consent and staying safe online. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect. They learn in depth about different faiths and cultures, and how sometimes people are not always treated equally. Pupils appreciate the diversity in their own school community and they celebrate difference.

The school knows that parents are its valued partners. The school, including governors, makes sure that parents have the knowledge and information they need to support its work. Parents are welcomed into school throughout the year for workshops on phonics and mathematics, as well as to celebrate the wider work of their children. Parents feel fully included in the life of the school and their children's learning.

Staff are extremely well supported by leaders. Staff morale is high and they are very proud to work at the school. They know that leaders, including governors, look after their workload and well-being when decisions are made about the school. For example, recent changes to quality assurance processes, and to the meeting schedule, have benefited staff greatly.

Governors and leaders at the school are inspirational. Governors understand and fulfil their statutory duties with diligence. They provide highly effective support and challenge to continually improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Staff and governors are passionate and dedicated to the children, pupils and families in this community.

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	111372
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10226353
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sue Howard
Headteacher	Jacqueline Coughlan
Website	www.stbedesinfants.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 May 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Its last section 48 inspection took place in 2019. The next section 48 inspection will be scheduled to take place before 2028.
- At the time of this inspection, leaders did not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 the 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They spoke with leaders and pupils. Inspectors also reviewed samples of pupils' work in these curriculum areas.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read with a trusted adult.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and the Archdiocese. She also met with a group from the governing body, including the chair.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the view 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including those relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also examined the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.

Inspection team

Sue Dymond, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joan Grant

Ofsted Inspector

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