

Inspection of St Christopher's RC Primary School

St Christopher's Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire OL6 9DP

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

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

The school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 16 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 flourish at this happy and harmonious school. They are immensely proud to be part of such a caring and welcoming learning community. Pupils live and breathe the school's vision and values in all that they say and do. They are happy and very well cared for by staff.

The school has an unwavering ambition for its pupils in terms of their academic achievement and their wider personal development. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND), work hard and strive to meet these high expectations. Typically, pupils achieve well across a range of subjects and particularly well in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils benefit from an impressive array of events, trips and activities to spark their interest and enthusiasm for learning. Pupils contribute extremely well to their school and the wider community. They behave impeccably and have beautiful manners.

The school's work to develop pupils' character is exceptional. Pupils show resilience and perseverance in all that they do. They know that sometimes making mistakes can be a good thing. For example, pupils told inspectors, 'Getting things wrong makes you strong.'

The vast majority of parents and carers, who shared their views with inspectors, were overwhelmingly positive in their praise of how the school helps their children to learn and grow. Parents greatly value the wealth of opportunities that the school provides.

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

The school has the highest ambition for its curriculum. Reading is at the front and centre of pupils' learning journey. As soon as children join the early years, they get off to a flying start. Children listen intently as staff share the magic of stories with them. Children enjoy joining in with much-loved songs and rhymes. They eagerly look forward to their phonics lessons. Children make strong progress through the early years curriculum.

The school wastes no time in rapidly spotting any pupils in danger of falling behind with the phonics programme. Staff provide timely and effective support. Pupils read confidently from books which are very well matched to the sounds that they have learned in class. Older pupils spoke enthusiastically about their reading. They read with strong understanding and confidence. Pupils very much enjoy their roles as school librarians and reading buddies to younger children.

In most subjects in key stages 1 and 2, the school has also successfully designed curriculums to support pupils to build on their prior learning. In these subjects, the school has chosen carefully the key content that pupils will learn. Pupils learn new

knowledge in logical, bitesize chunks from the Nursery class to the end of Year 6. Consequently, most pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Staff skilfully impart new knowledge to pupils. They make careful checks to ensure that pupils' misunderstandings are quickly picked up. Teachers use this information well to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to ensure that pupils' learning is secure. In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils consistently outperform their peers nationally in statutory tests and assessments.

In a few other subjects, the school has not ensured that pupils develop a sufficiently strong body of knowledge and skills over time. Furthermore, some teachers do not check that pupils have a secure understanding of essential topics and concepts. This hinders some pupils' ability to make links with previous learning and to build on what they know already.

The school's work to enhance pupils' understanding of the wider world is of the highest quality. For example, the school capitalises on the wealth of opportunities available within the local area, and further afield, to broaden pupils' minds and raise their aspirations for the future.

Pupils have a deep understanding of diversity and difference. Pupils' knowledge of fundamental British values is highly impressive. During discussions with inspectors, pupils spoke with maturity and sensitivity about why they should be respectful and tolerant towards people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles.

Pupils understand why it is important to have rules and routines as part of school life. Children in the early years respond extremely well to their teachers and relish making them proud. Older pupils care for each other well. They listen with sustained concentration, to their teachers and to each other, during their lessons each day.

Pupils benefit from a vast array of opportunities to make a sustained and valued contribution to both their school and the wider community. For example, they regularly fundraise for charity. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors have a secure knowledge of the school. They use their wide range of skills to support and challenge the school to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. Staff are extremely proud to work at the school. They very much appreciate the school's open-door approach. They value the decisions that the school has taken to support their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has not ensured that some pupils develop the depth of knowledge that they should. This prevents these pupils from making secure connections between different topics and concepts in these subjects. The school should ensure that, in these subjects, pupils are supported well to gain a rich body of knowledge over time.

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 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	106256
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10211849
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Terry Gould
Headteacher	Ian Noone
Website	www.st-christophers.tameside.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2007, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Some new governors have been appointed since the previous inspection, including the chair of governors.
- This school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The last section 48 inspection took place in May 2018. The next section 48 inspection is likely to take place before 2026.

Information about this inspection

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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in school. An inspector met with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, and art and design. 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in other subjects. They spoke to some pupils about their learning in these subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 groups of pupils about their experiences at school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. They considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Louise McArdle, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Haroon Asghar	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Gartside	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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