

Inspection of a good school: St William's Catholic Primary School

Ince Green Lane, Ince-in-Makerfield, Ince, Wigan, Lancashire WN2 2DG

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2023

Outcome

St William's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are integral to making St William's Catholic Primary School the warm and welcoming place that it is. They are happy in school, and they build strong friendships with others.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are kind and considerate. Pupils display impeccable manners. They are highly respectful to one another and to the adults they meet. The school is a haven of calm, where pupils learn without distraction. They enjoy active and sociable playtimes.

The school has a clear vision for how it wants to prepare pupils for the next steps in their lives. It has raised its expectations of what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can achieve. Pupils take pride in their learning and, typically, they achieve well.

Pupils, including children in the early years, benefit from a wealth of experiences that support them to develop their confidence. For example, older pupils recalled their recent residential trip enthusiastically. They spoke of overcoming their fears and building resilience through an array of outdoor and adventurous activities.

Pupils are entrusted with a range of leadership roles, such as acting as school councillors and reading ambassadors. They relish these opportunities, and they enjoy making suggestions about how to make the school even better. All pupils can participate in these activities, including those with SEND.

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

The school, with the support of governors, has set about improving its curriculum in a measured and well-paced way. In doing so, the school has carefully protected staff's workload and well-being. For example, staff trial and evaluate the impact of new initiatives before they are rolled out to all classes.

The school has prioritised subject leadership by, for instance, drawing upon educational research, training and the support of professional associations. Subject leaders are exceptionally knowledgeable about the subjects they lead. This has supported them to define clearly the vocabulary and essential knowledge that pupils need to learn from the early years through to Year 6 in all subjects.

The school's systematic approach to improving the quality of education means that some subject curriculums are more established than others. Teachers have developed the expertise to deliver these curriculums well. Where improvements to curriculums are more recent, the school has had insufficient opportunity to enhance teachers' subject knowledge to the same extent. This means that, in a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not delivered as effectively as in others. Pupils' knowledge is sometimes uneven in these subjects as a result.

Staff know all pupils extremely well. They identify pupils' additional needs quickly and accurately, starting in the early years. Staff are skilled at providing pupils, including those with SEND, with the support they need to get the most from their learning.

In many subjects, teachers skilfully check what pupils know and can do. They support pupils to build on firm foundations and to learn new concepts well. This approach to assessment is more recent in some subjects. In these subjects, teachers do not check consistently well that pupils' understanding is secure before moving on to new learning. From time to time, this slows the rate at which these pupils learn.

Communication and language sit at the heart of children's learning in the early years. Staff engage children in a stream of high-quality conversation as they learn and play. This prepares children well to learn to read.

Staff across the school are well trained to teach pupils how to read. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Staff deliver the phonics curriculum consistently well. In the main, pupils practise their reading using books that closely match the sounds they know. Pupils who fall behind with their phonics are supported to catch up effectively. This helps these pupils to become successful readers.

Staff enjoy sharing their love of reading with pupils. This begins in the Nursery class, where children vote for the books that they would like their teachers to read to them. During the inspection, children listened with rapt attention to their book of choice. Older pupils read widely and enthusiastically. They leave the school well prepared for the challenges of the key stage 3 curriculum.

The school supports pupils to develop strong learning behaviours. Pupils are focused and attentive in lessons. This helps to make the school a calm and purposeful place to learn and play.

The school places a strong focus on pupils' wider development. Pupils learn to embrace diversity. They spoke about topics such as relationships with others with compassion and sensitivity. Pupils learn how to be healthy in mind and body, as well as how to stay safe online. For example, they enjoy learning how to prepare a range of nutritious dishes, such

as fruit kebabs, healthy sandwiches and wholesome soups. Pupils also learn how important it is to budget and to be financially aware. This prepares them well for their future lives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's work to refine some subject curriculums is at an earlier stage. In turn, staff have not built their curriculum expertise in these subjects sufficiently well. Occasionally, some pupils' learning is uneven as a result. The school should ensure that staff are provided with the support they need to deliver their revised class curriculums as well as intended.
- In those subjects where the curriculums are newer, the school's approaches to checking on what pupils know and remember are less well developed. This makes it more difficult for teachers to assess where pupils have potential gaps in their knowledge. As the school implements revised curriculums in these subjects, it should ensure that teachers are fully equipped to check what pupils know and can do before introducing new learning.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2018.

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	106497
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10313983
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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Warburton
Headteacher	Emily Ellis
Website	www.saintwilliams.wigan.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in February 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place during the academic year 2024 to 2025.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.
- Since the school was last inspected, there has been an increase in the number of pupils who speak EAL. There are 19 home languages spoken by these pupils.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff. She met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. The inspector also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the archdiocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and reviewed a sample of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including records of governing body meetings, leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school and observed their behaviour at playtime. She considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. She also spoke to some parents and carers at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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