

Inspection of a good school: St Hilda's C of E Primary School

Warwick Road South, Firswood, Stretford, Manchester M16 0SH

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

Outcome

St Hilda's C of E Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Helen Plant. This school is part of Vantage CE Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jill Albertina, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Phil Mason.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are overwhelmingly happy at this school. They enjoy attending school each day. The caring culture underpins all aspects of school life. This begins in the early years, where children soon make new friends and settle into school quickly. Many parents and carers, who shared their views with the inspector, commented on the nurturing and supportive nature of the school. They feel part of a welcoming community.

The school has the highest of ambitions for pupils' learning. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), proudly rise to meet the school's high expectations. They achieve well across the curriculum.

Pupils behave sensibly. They actively engage in lessons and listen attentively to their teachers and each other. Children in the early years respond eagerly to the interesting and exciting activities that staff provide.

Pupils value the opportunities that they have to contribute ideas for a range of after-school activities. The school has organised a myriad of clubs that match pupils' interests and foster their talents. For example, pupils spoke animatedly about attending the 'glow-in-the-dark' dodgeball club. They proudly take on positions of responsibility such as worship leaders, library leaders and school councillors. Pupils make a positive contribution to their school and community.

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

From the beginning of the early years to the end of Year 6, the school's ambitious curriculum is thoughtfully ordered. Teachers are clear about the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn and have a secure understanding of the way that the curriculum fits

together. This enables them to help pupils to make links between new content and their prior learning.

Teachers use a range of ways to support pupils to remember important learning. For example, they emphasise the use of subject-specific vocabulary and provide helpful prompts to jog pupils' memories.

In most subjects, teachers frequently check what pupils have learned. Teachers use this information to rectify any gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, pupils show secure knowledge in most subjects. They spoke about their learning with enthusiasm and confidence. However, from time to time, some teachers do not design activities that emphasise the important information that they intend pupils to acquire. As a result, some pupils do not develop a deeper understanding in a small number of subjects.

Reading is the jewel in the crown of this school. It sits at the front and centre of the school's curriculum and forms a strong foundation for future learning. This starts in the Reception class where children learn to recite familiar tales and rhymes. The newly renovated library is an oasis of calm filled with high-quality books that capture pupils' imagination and interest in reading. Pupils have very positive attitudes to reading.

Children begin to learn the phonics curriculum as soon as they start school. Staff expertly identify and swiftly address gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. As a result, pupils who struggle with reading are helped to keep up with the pace of the early reading programme. They read fluently and confidently from books which match well with the sounds that they know. Older pupils read well and with secure understanding.

The school quickly identifies pupils' additional needs accurately. It provides teachers with the information that they need to successfully adapt the delivery of the curriculum for these pupils. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well.

The school is mindful of pupils' emotional well-being and provides them with effective support. This helps those pupils who struggle with their emotional well-being to feel happy in school. Pupils treat each other well. They show respect to those who are different. Typically, pupils behave well and move around school in an orderly manner.

Trustees, governors and the school have made sure that attendance is a high priority. They have carefully analysed attendance data to quickly spot any concerns and act upon these swiftly. The school has employed a range of strategies including working with parents to effectively remove any barriers to high attendance. As a result, attendance levels have quickly improved and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased.

The school has a well-considered programme to develop pupils' wider development, which links closely to what they are learning in class. Pupils benefit from a range of trips. For example, pupils enjoyed visiting an art exhibition and an aquarium. The school's celebration of different religious festivals helps to build a culture where everyone is valued.

Staff feel that the school is mindful of their well-being. Together, the school and trust have created a collaborative culture. The school listens to its staff. Staff workload is managed well. For instance, teachers are given protected time to lead their subjects.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school carries out statutory checks effectively, which means that pupils are safe. However, these checks are not recorded as well as they should be. The trust has not assured itself, that the records that the school keeps, accurately record the checks that have been carried out on staff and visitors.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers choose activities that do not help pupils to secure their learning. This means that pupils have some gaps in their learning over time. The school should ensure that teachers are supported to design learning activities that help pupils to understand and consolidate knowledge in the longer term in these curriculums.
- The trust has not assured itself that the records that are kept on staff and visitors are managed robustly. This means that some gaps in information have not been spotted because there are not sufficiently rigorous processes in place. The trust should ensure that robust mechanisms are in place so that checks are recorded appropriately.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Hilda's CofE school, to be good in May 2014.

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	147552
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10314052
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phil Mason
CEO of the trust	Jill Albertina
Headteacher	Helen Plant
Website	www.sthildasprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- St Hilda's CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2019. When its predecessor school, St Hilda's CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. Its last section 48 inspection was in March 2019. The next one will take place before the end of the summer term 2027.

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 their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff. She met with the CEO, some trustees including the chair of trustees and the chair of governors. She held telephone conversations with representatives of the diocese and the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. 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 also spoke to some other subject leaders.
- 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 scrutinised a range of documentation including attendance and behaviour data, minutes of trustee and local advisory board meetings, the school's self-evaluation and development plan.
- The inspector met with some parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspector spoke to staff to discuss the school's support for their well-being and workload.
- The inspector spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspector also considered the views of parents on Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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