

Inspection of Dolphinholme Church of England Primary School

Dolphinholme, Dolphinholme Primary School, Lancaster, Lancashire LA2 9AN

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 March 2024

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

The school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 11 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 are happy members of this small and friendly school. They enjoy taking on various positions of responsibility in school. For example, older pupils take on roles such as being a buddy to help children in the early years to settle in well.

The school grasps every opportunity to make the curriculum as engaging and meaningful as possible. For example, pupils benefit from a range of visits from local residents who help them with different school projects and events. Pupils also enjoy completing outdoor activities in the school's extensive grounds. Pupils enjoy singing together; they sing the school song with great pride and enthusiasm.

The school expects pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. Pupils happily rise to meet these expectations. Overall, they make strong progress through the curriculum.

Pupils' conduct embodies the school's values. This begins as soon as children start school. Children in the two-year-old provision and across early years quickly learn to take turns and to listen carefully to others.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers, who shared their views with inspectors, spoke very positively about the school. They feel a valued part of this tight-knit community.

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

The school has designed a curriculum which is broad and ambitious. It has thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn from the beginning of the early years to the end of Year 6. The order in which the content is introduced has also been considered carefully so that it builds pupils' learning in a logical way.

The school makes staff training a high priority. Teachers deliver curriculums with confidence. They carefully explain new learning to pupils. Assessment information is used well in most curriculums to adapt future lessons and to address any misconceptions quickly. In most subjects, pupils achieve well.

In a few curriculums, subjects have undergone some recent refinements so that the most important knowledge that pupils need to remember has been more clearly identified. In these curriculums, subjects are at an earlier stage of development. The school is in the process of adapting its assessment systems so that they can more accurately identify how well pupils remembering key learning over time. Some pupils, sometimes struggle to recall prior learning in some of these subjects.

The school develops a love of reading for pupils. For example, children in the early years, including those in the two-year-old provision, join in enthusiastically with different songs and nursery rhymes. They enjoy voting for their favourite book at the end of the day.

Children in the Reception class benefit from a well-thought-out phonics programme, which they begin to learn as soon as they start school. Struggling readers quickly receive effective support so that they keep up with the phonics programme. Pupils read books which are well matched to the sounds that they have already mastered. This helps them to read books with increasing fluency and confidence.

By the time pupils leave key stage 2, most are accomplished readers. They read with expression and strong understanding. Pupils carry out their roles as librarians with diligence and pride.

The school makes sure that the additional needs of pupils with SEND are quickly and effectively identified. Skilled staff ensure that these pupils access the same curriculum content as their peers. Pupils with SEND also benefit from the various extra-curricular activities that the school offers.

Pupils know that it is important to come to school each day. They attend regularly. Pupils show very positive attitudes to their work. They behave well in lessons and during breaktimes. Their learning is rarely disrupted by others.

Pupils benefit from a range of activities to develop their character and resilience. For example, they spoke very animatedly about the 'Talent Soirée', where they showcase a wide range of talents to each other, parents and staff. They also look forward to the annual residential visit, where pupils can take part in team-building exercises to develop their confidence and skills. Pupils enjoy learning to play musical instruments.

The school places a high priority on developing pupils' well-being. Pupils spoke confidently about the ways in which the school encourages them to look after their mental and physical health. For example, pupils enjoy taking part in yoga sessions and other activities during mental health awareness week.

Governors share the school's high ambition for pupils. They support and challenge the school to make sure it is the best it can be. The school carefully considers staff well-being and workload when making any changes to policies or procedures.

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 has made some recent refinements to a few subjects so that the most important content that pupils will learn is identified more clearly. These changes are relatively new and some pupils still have some gaps in their knowledge. The

school should make sure that these changes become embedded so that pupils know more and remember more over time.

- In the subjects which have been recently refined, assessment systems are less well established. This makes it more difficult for teachers to use assessment information effectively to find out what pupils know and understand. The school should make sure that teachers use assessment information more effectively so that they can address any misconceptions and shape future teaching appropriately in these subjects.

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	119526
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10314014
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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Thomas Rose
Headteacher	Joanne Mather
Website	www.dolphinholme.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 April 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school which is part of the diocese of Blackburn. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in December 2021. The next section 48 inspection is scheduled to take place in 2026.
- The school offers a before-school and after-school club.
- 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.

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 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, other leaders and staff 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 the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and physical education. 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.
- An inspector also discussed the curriculum in other subjects. She 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. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- An inspector 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

Alison Dickinson

Ofsted Inspector

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