

Inspection of a good school: St Monica's RC Primary School

Woodsend Road South, Flixton, Urmston, Manchester M41 6QB

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2024

Outcome

St Monica's RC Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming, friendly school. They build strong relationships with staff, which helps them to feel happy. Pupils look after each other and enjoy playing and learning together. Older pupils relish being role models for younger children as part of their buddy and playground leader responsibilities. Pupils know that staff will help them with any worries or concerns that they may have.

The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They work hard to meet these expectations. Pupils typically achieve well across a range of subjects.

Pupils behave well during lessons and at social times. They enjoy the variety of rewards that they gain for positive conduct. For example, pupils are proud when they are chosen for headteacher awards. They spoke of tokens that they earn for demonstrating the school's playtime values of respect, honesty and teamwork.

Pupils benefit from opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. For example, they visit the local library and air raid shelters. Pupils also go on residential trips. They enjoy inviting their parents and carers into school to share their learning. Pupils were particularly excited to tell the inspector about a recent 'stay and investigate' morning that they shared as part of 'science week'.

Pupils enjoy a variety of extra-curricular experiences. These include archery, drama, gardening and forest school clubs. Pupils are proud to represent their school in dodgeball, netball and football tournaments.

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

The school has reviewed its curriculum and has worked hard to design learning that is ambitious and interesting for pupils. It has identified the important knowledge that pupils

should acquire. Careful consideration has been given to the order that this knowledge should be taught, to support the learning of pupils in the mixed-age classes.

The school identifies pupils who may have additional needs quickly. Staff ensure that these pupils have the support that they need to progress well through the curriculum.

The school has prioritised reading. From the start of the Nursery Year, teachers incorporate a variety of interesting and appropriate books into children's learning. As pupils move into key stage 1, they read regularly and apply their phonics knowledge with increasing confidence. The school ensures that pupils read from books that are well matched to the sounds that they already know. Pupils who struggle to read receive the support that they need to catch up quickly. Older pupils show interest in a range of authors. They are particularly delighted to be school librarians and they enjoy sharing class texts with teachers and their friends.

Staff are equipped to design learning that helps pupils to acquire the knowledge that they need. They use a range of activities to encourage pupils to recall recent learning. For instance, staff in the early years communicate clearly and effectively with children. This helps children to learn and remember important vocabulary. However, in a few subjects beyond English and mathematics, the school has not identified the most important subject-specific concepts that pupils should revisit over time. This means that some pupils struggle to remember some of their learning.

In many subjects, the school uses a range of appropriate strategies to check that pupils have understood and remembered what has been taught. Overall, this helps staff to identify and swiftly address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, in a small number of subjects beyond English and mathematics, assessment strategies are not as effective as they could be in supporting staff to identify gaps in pupils' learning. This hinders some pupils from building their knowledge securely over time in these subjects.

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere across school which helps pupils to focus on their learning. Children in the early years follow well-established routines. This helps to successfully prepare them for the next stage of their education. The school prioritises pupils' attendance. A small number of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. The school has a clear understanding of the reasons for this. It works closely with parents and, where necessary, external agencies to support these pupils to attend school more regularly.

Pupils learn about the diversity of the wider world. They understand that people have different families, backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. Pupils learn about the importance of treating everyone equally. Pupils know that it is important to keep physically and mentally healthy.

Staff spoke warmly of the culture of collaboration and support in the school. There have been a lot of recent changes to improve the curriculum. However, staff value how the school has considered the impact of this on their workload and well-being. They appreciate the dedicated time that they are given to fulfil their roles well.

Governors are well informed about all aspects of the school. They ensure that ongoing school development is focused and purposeful. This has a positive impact on the education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects beyond English and mathematics, the school has not identified the important subject-specific concepts that pupils need to revisit. This means that some pupils' learning is not as secure as it could be in these subjects. The school should ensure that teachers are clear about the important concepts to revisit and when, so that pupils make connections in their learning.
- In a small number of subjects beyond English and mathematics, assessment strategies are not as effective as they could be. They do not help staff to identify specific gaps in pupils' learning. This limits some pupils in building their knowledge in these subjects securely. The school should refine and embed strategies for assessment in these few subjects, so that pupils are more effectively supported to know and remember more.

Background

When we have judged 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 school to be good in October 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	106356
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10313982
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	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matthew Callaghan
Headteacher	Mark Doherty
Website	www.stmonicasschoolflixton.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. There have also been some changes to the membership of the governing body.
- This Roman Catholic school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in March 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of 2027.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 that the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions

about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector spoke with subject leaders and some pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- The inspector observed pupils from key stages 1 and 2 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- The inspector talked with staff and leaders about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector met with the leaders responsible for behaviour, SEND provision and pupils' wider development.
- 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 spoke with pupils about their experiences at school. She looked at a range of policies and documents relating to pupils' welfare and education. She also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- The inspector met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Rebecca Jewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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