

# Inspection of St Columba's RC Primary School

Ripley Street, Tonge Moor, Bolton, Lancashire BL2 3AR

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 April 2024

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

This 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 keen to help others to succeed. Through undertaking roles such as subject ambassadors, school councillors and prefects, pupils make meaningful contributions to the school. For example, reading ambassadors help children in the early years with their phonics reading. Prefects help to make social times a positive experience for their fellow pupils. Through the school's 'faith in action' initiatives, pupils proudly support charitable causes.

Pupils enjoy the curriculum trips that are arranged for them. For example, they told inspectors about the geography fieldwork study that helped them to learn about how rivers are formed. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the residential trip to experience outdoor activities. There are several extra-curricular clubs on offer, which some pupils access. These have recently included football, dance and choir club.

The school has high ambitions for what pupils should learn. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), generally achieve well in most curriculum subjects. In recent times, pupils have made particularly strong progress in mathematics.

Pupils conduct themselves impeccably at this school. They love to learn. Pupils are kind and friendly. They value the school's swift actions to deal with any minor disagreements. They get along well with each other and with their teachers. They are safe and happy.

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

The school has designed a balanced curriculum that is ambitious for its pupils, from the Nursery Year to Year 6. It has broadly outlined what it expects pupils to learn by the end of each year. In many subjects, the school has broken down these expectations into smaller, logical steps of knowledge. In these subjects, the school provides staff with clear guidance on how and when to teach this knowledge. Staff typically deliver this learning content consistently. This helps pupils, including those with SEND, to build their knowledge securely over time.

The school is currently refining a small number of subject curriculums. Consequently, there is less clarity about what knowledge needs to be taught in these areas of the curriculum. Pupils' understanding in some of these subjects is not secure as it is in others.

Overall, teachers carry out effective checks on what pupils have learned. Teachers respond to these checks by providing help and guidance in lessons so that pupils quickly address their misconceptions. However, the school's checks on learning are less precise in subjects that are still being developed.

The school identifies pupils with SEND early. It provides these pupils with the support that they need to achieve. The school liaises well with external agencies to provide more specialised support for pupils with complex SEND.

Pupils enjoy reading. Teachers read a wide range of high-quality texts to pupils. In early years, these texts are woven through many of the learning activities that teachers design for children.

The school makes sure that children begin learning phonics as soon as they start in Reception Year. Well-trained staff deliver the school's phonics programme consistently. Pupils read books that are appropriate for their current stage of learning. They receive extra help to catch up when they are struggling to learn new sounds. Most pupils meet the phonics screening check in Year 1.

The school encourages regular attendance. However, some of the school's actions to tackle attendance issues and lateness are not as focused as they could be. This means that some pupils miss out on important learning.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Disruptions to learning are very rare. Pupils are very sensible when they move around the school. They are considerate and polite. Children in the early years quickly learn classroom routines and rise to the school's high expectations for behaviour.

The school caters well for pupils' personal development. Pupils develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values through their curriculum learning and regular school assemblies. They are respectful of the different backgrounds of others. Older pupils spoke highly of the leadership programme that the school organises for them. They told inspectors how this programme develops their personal attributes, such as confidence and self-awareness. Pupils have a secure knowledge of how to maintain healthy relationships with others.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties and take an active role in school life. Staff are appreciative of leaders' actions to support them in managing their workload. For example, they value the extra time that they are given to carry out additional tasks.

## **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, the school is still refining the curriculum to break down content into smaller, logical steps of knowledge. At times, pupils' knowledge in these subjects is not secure. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking so that staff have clearer guidance on what they should teach. It should also ensure that

this work helps teachers to carry out more precise checks on what pupils have learned.

- Some of the school's actions to improve pupils' punctuality and attendance are not having the desired effect. Some pupils miss out on important learning because they are late to school or do not attend regularly. The school should review its approaches to removing the barriers that are preventing some pupils from attending school regularly and on 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105220
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10337629
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	233
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ann Gracie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kath Baker
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stcolumbasrcprimary.co.uk">www.stcolumbasrcprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	18 and 19 September 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- A new deputy headteacher was appointed at the beginning of the academic year.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- There is a before-school club at the school, which the governing body oversees.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic primary school. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in March 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of 2027.

## 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 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 of the school.

- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors. Inspectors also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- 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 took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Joyce

Ofsted Inspector

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