Inspection of Bredbury St. Marks CofE Primary School

Redhouse Lane, Bredbury, Stockport, Cheshire SK6 1BX

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Emma Harding. This school is part of Chester Diocesan 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, Neil Dixon, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Mason.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in school. They feel part of the St. Mark's community and know that they matter. Pupils value the school's warm and welcoming environment. They help to make everyone feel included in their school.

In recent years, the school has raised its expectations of what pupils should achieve, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has created a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum from the early years to Year 6. The impact of this work is increasingly seen in how well pupils achieve.

Pupils typically behave well. This means that learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils follow the school rules. They relish the many responsibilities that they are given, such as becoming librarians and ethos councillors. This helps pupils to feel trusted and valued. Pupils know that they can talk to adults in school if there is a problem, and that they will be given the help that they need. As a result, pupils feel safe and ready to learn.

Pupils are enthused by the opportunities afforded to them beyond the classroom, such as clubs, trips and visits. They embrace the 50 experiences that the school provides to expand and deepen their learning. These include attending a residential visit, attempting a world record and jumping in puddles.

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

The school has been through recent turmoil and change. Pupils' attainment and progress in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6 was significantly below the national average in 2023. The impact of changes in staffing, the COVID-19 pandemic and weak curriculums, meant that pupils had too many gaps in their learning to achieve as well as they should. The school has engaged positively with the trust to strengthen subject curriculums and to improve the way that these are delivered. As a result, pupils are better equipped with the knowledge and skills that they need for the next stage of their education.

The school has designed a well-thought-out curriculum. It has thought carefully about how to meet pupils' needs. The additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified early. Staff have received the training that they need to make sure that these pupils can learn successfully alongside their peers.

In a few subjects, the curriculum has only recently been revised. Some older pupils have insufficient prior knowledge to build on. On occasion, teachers do not carefully consider how to address gaps in pupils' learning before introducing new subject content. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they should.

Most staff have strong subject knowledge. They present information clearly and select activities that support pupils to recall new learning. However, the school's approaches to assessment are underdeveloped in a small number of subjects. While teachers identify how well pupils have remembered recent knowledge in these subjects, they do not check how well pupils retain key knowledge in their long-term memory. This hinders how well teachers build on what pupils already know.

The curriculum is underpinned by high-quality texts. Pupils are excited about the development of their library, including the new books that are available to them. In the early years, children enjoy sharing books and joining in with known stories and rhymes. Children are ready to learn to read using phonics from the start of the Reception Year. The school has ensured that staff deliver the phonics programme successfully. Most pupils learn to read well. The school provides timely and effective support to any pupils who find learning to read a challenge.

Children in the early years settle into school routines quickly. Staff get to know children well and build strong relationships with them. Children engage with their learning enthusiastically. They concentrate for increasing periods of time.

The school has not ensured that some early years staff have the expertise to strengthen children's learning. On occasion, some staff's interactions mainly guide children or involve closed questions. When this happens, children have limited opportunities to make decisions or to think more deeply about their learning. This hinders how well some children in the early years achieve.

Pupils' attitudes to their learning are positive. The school is relentless in its efforts to improve attendance where this falls short of its high expectations. Working alongside external agencies, the school has developed effective strategies to support pupils and their families. These strategies are improving pupils' attendance.

The school's curriculum supports pupils to understand and accept difference. Pupils learn about the importance of a healthy relationship. They know how to keep mentally and physically well. For example, pupils understand that it is important to eat and drink a range of foods to stay healthy.

The local governing board is new. Members of the board have quickly developed their knowledge of the school. The school carefully considers how its decisions impact on staff's workload. Staff value this and feel listened to, cared for and appreciated.

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, weaknesses in previous curriculums mean that older pupils have some gaps in their knowledge. This makes it more difficult for them to build securely on what they already know. The school should ensure that teachers address pupils' knowledge gaps so that they can achieve the ambitious outcomes of new subject curriculums.
- In a small number of subjects, the assessment of pupils' learning is not refined enough to help staff to identify where some pupils have forgotten key learning over time. This means that gaps in pupils' understanding between one topic and the next go unchecked. The school should ensure that there are checks in place to gauge pupils' long-term retention of key subject knowledge so that staff can reinforce pupils' learning more effectively.
- The school has not ensured that some staff in the early years know how to support and enhance children's learning through quality interactions. This means that, from their individual starting points, some children do not make as much progress as they could. The school should ensure that staff in the early years receive the training they need to be able to support children to achieve as well as they can.

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	147723
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10321468
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Mason
CEO of trust	Neil Dixon
Headteacher	Emma Harding
Website	www.st-marks.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Chester Diocesan Academies Trust.
- Bredbury St. Mark's CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school in February 2020. When its predecessor school, St. Mark's CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- A new headteacher, assistant headteachers and local governing board have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Chester. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in March 2017. The next section 48 inspection is scheduled to take place during the next school year.
- The school offers a breakfast club and after-school provision each day.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers and other senior leaders. Inspectors also held meetings with other staff, including those responsible for attendance and pupils' behaviour, welfare and personal development.
- The inspectors held meetings with the leaders responsible for SEND and the provision for children in the early years.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing board, including the chair of the local governing board. She also met with the deputy chair of the trustees.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors met with parents and reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Kathy Nichol, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Pars	Ofsted Inspector

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