

# Inspection of a good school: St Raphael's Catholic Primary School

Huddersfield Road, Millbrook, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 3JL

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 July 2024

## Outcome

St Raphael's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have a strong sense of belonging at this vibrant and successful school. They think highly of their teachers, and they appreciate the learning opportunities available to them. Pupils are happy. They know that there are trusted adults in school who can help them.

The school has high aspirations for pupils' achievement, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils rise to these expectations. They achieve highly. Pupils value their education, knowing that it will help them to pursue their future ambitions. They told the inspector that they aspire to a variety of careers, such as in volcanology, history, photography, teaching and design.

Pupils behave well. They understand the school's 'golden rules', including to be kind and helpful, and to look after each other. Pupils try hard to follow these rules each day, which helps the school to be a place where pupils can 'care, share and learn together'. They said that they treat everyone equally and with respect in their school.

Pupils benefit from a range of experiences. For instance, they enjoy trips to the church, local care home and museums. Pupils participate in after-school clubs, including choir, cross country, netball and cheerleading. Year 6 pupils organise activities for their peers at lunchtime, for example art, reading, yoga, history and nature clubs.

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

The school provides a broad and knowledge-rich curriculum. This curriculum begins from the start of the early years and builds towards suitably ambitious goals. In 2023, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 was exceptionally high. Pupils' attainment was also above national averages in key stage 1 assessments.

In most subjects, the school provides pupils with a high-quality education. It has determined the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which this should happen. This enables pupils to typically achieve well. However, in a small number of

subjects, the school has not established all the content that pupils should know. This hinders pupils from learning all that they should to build a secure knowledge of these subjects.

Staff make use of training and support to further develop their subject knowledge, particularly in subjects that are better established. Teachers select suitable activities to deliver learning successfully. However, occasionally, they do not implement the curriculum consistently well. Some of their explanations lack clarity and, sometimes, teachers do not check thoroughly that pupils learn what they intended. This variability results in some pupils making mistakes and developing some misunderstandings that teachers do not address swiftly enough.

The school identifies pupils with SEND as soon as they start in the early years. Staff work well with professionals, and with parents and carers, to provide targeted and timely support for these pupils. This helps pupils with SEND to learn well.

Reading is a priority of the school. The curriculum centres around high-quality texts. For example, there are well-stocked book areas in each classroom, which encourages pupils to read widely and often. Staff make sure that pupils read each day. Pupils spoke fondly of whole-school book swaps and of reading to their younger peers to foster their love of reading.

Children in the early years are extremely well prepared for key stage 1. They benefit from a language-rich environment that is full of rhymes, songs and stories. Much of what children learn stems from exciting books. Children start to learn phonics from skilled staff at the beginning of the Reception class. Pupils read from books that contain the sounds that they already know. They develop into accurate, fluent readers.

Pupils have high levels of attendance. The school understands the reasons for absences. Staff work closely with families to support pupils to attend well. Pupils want to be in school. They have positive attitudes towards their learning, which helps classrooms to be purposeful learning environments. Children learn well-established routines from the start of the early years. Classrooms buzz with children's excitement and eagerness to learn.

The school contributes well to pupils' wider development. Pupils have a range of responsibilities, including as sports captains, worship leaders and librarians. In their roles as 'buddies', older pupils act as positive role models for children in the early years. Pupils help to collect food and raise money for charities and those who are less fortunate than themselves.

The governing body provides appropriate support and challenge to the school. Staff said that they appreciate how everybody supports each other, which helps the school to be a 'lovely environment to work in'. The school considers staff's workload before introducing new initiatives.

Parents were exceedingly positive about the school. They reported that their children flourish in the school's nurturing and family-like environment. The overwhelming consensus was that parents could not be happier to be a part of the school.

## 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 small number of subjects, the school is still refining the content of the curriculum. As a result, some pupils do not develop a secure understanding in these subjects. The school should ensure that teachers are clear about the information that pupils should learn to enable them to build a deep and rich body of subject knowledge.
- At times, teachers do not make their explanations of new concepts and information fully clear, nor do they check persistently enough that pupils have understood new learning. This means that some pupils make errors and have some misunderstandings that go unaddressed. The school should support staff to implement the curriculum consistently well, so that pupils learn as well as they should.

## 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 school to be good in May 2015.

## 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>	106242
<b>Local authority</b>	Tameside
<b>Inspection number</b>	10348017
<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>	218
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Catherine Bardsley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynn Lakner
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-raphaels.tameside.sch.uk">www.st-raphaels.tameside.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	10 and 11 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- This Roman Catholic school is in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in February 2022. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by February 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 that the school 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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other school leaders. He held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the vice-chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. He considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and documents pertaining to pupils' behaviour and levels of attendance.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers. He spoke with some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at curriculum documentation and spoke with pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- The inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read with a familiar adult. He discussed reading with a group of older pupils.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. He also took account of the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school, including at breakfast club, at playtime and during lunchtime.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. He spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. He also considered some letters that parents sent for his attention.

### **Inspection team**

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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