

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Withnell

Bury Lane, Withnell, Chorley, Lancashire PR6 8SD

Inspection date: 17 December 2024

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Withnell has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and thrive at this nurturing school. They are polite, kind and considerate. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff, who care for them well.

The school has high aspirations for pupils from the moment that they arrive, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils enjoy their learning and take part in lessons with enthusiasm. As a result, pupils achieve highly across the curriculum.

Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They appreciate the awards that they receive when they demonstrate care and compassion towards others.

Pupils benefit from an impressive range of activities designed to cultivate their talents and interests, such as sports, arts and music clubs. There are equally extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. Older pupils act as school councillors, sports leaders and buddies to younger children. The school provides pupils with access to trips that enhance their understanding of the wider world. For example, they visit places of worship, the theatre and engage in cultural visits, including to London.

Pupils are extremely proud of their contribution to the local community. For example, they have raised money for numerous charities and have taken action to ensure that their school is operating sustainably. Pupils become confident and articulate young people.

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

The school has continued to build on its previous successes. It has designed an inspiring curriculum that is both broad and ambitious. It has thought carefully about how pupils' knowledge develops over time. Most pupils achieve extremely well.

Staff appreciate the clarity about what to teach and when they should teach it. This supports their workload. In the early years, children benefit from the high-quality interactions that they have with staff. Children in the Reception Year are thoroughly prepared for the demands of the Year 1 curriculum. Across the curriculum, pupils respond admirably to the high expectations that the school has for their written communication. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for each stage of their education.

Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. They are alert to any misconceptions that pupils may have about their learning. These are addressed promptly. As a result, pupils build their knowledge of different subjects securely over time. Typically, staff design activities that help pupils to learn the curriculum well.

Pupils are highly motivated by the work that they are given. Their positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to the calm and purposeful environment that exists at the school. Children in the early years quickly learn to share and take turns. They make the most of the activities that staff design for them, which contributes well to their early development.

Most pupils with SEND receive the support that they need to learn well alongside their peers. In recent times, the school has welcomed pupils with a broader range of additional needs. The school is at the early stages of making refinements to its support for these pupils. As a result, staff do not currently receive the information and training that they need to support these pupils sufficiently well. When this happens, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could.

The school identifies and addresses the reading needs of pupils with precision. Staff deliver the school's chosen phonics programme with a high level of expertise. The school provides effective support to any pupils who need help to close gaps in their phonics knowledge. Pupils become confident and fluent readers. Parents and carers welcome the useful information that they are given so that they can develop their child's reading at home.

The school's personal development provision prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils recognise and value the differences that may exist between people. They know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They appreciate the input that they receive from visitors to the school that enhances their understanding of geology, how to manage money and of different careers. The school prioritises pupils' emotional development. Its 'Woodland Well-being' programme teaches pupils to manage their own behaviour so that they become resilient young people.

Governors routinely gather detailed information about the performance of the school to assure themselves about the quality of education that pupils receive. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders at all levels while showing consideration for staff's well-being. This has been particularly important when unavoidable temporary changes in leadership arrangements have needed to occur. The school consistently makes decisions in the best interests of pupils.

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 is developing its provision for the specific needs of a few pupils with SEND. This means that the support that these pupils receive is variable and some do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills they need so that they are better able to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND equally well.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in October 2019.

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	119680
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10348206
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	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alexa Johnson
Headteacher	Katie Cunliffe
Website	www.stjosephswithnell.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- A new chair of governors has recently been appointed.
- The school has a religious character. It is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2019. Its next inspection is due within the next academic year.
- The school has experienced a number of changes in its leadership arrangements since the last inspection. Some of these have been interim.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND; the curriculum, including reading; pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils or for staff. However, inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils through discussions during the inspection.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rob Bourdon-Pierre

Ofsted Inspector

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