

Inspection of Rawtenstall Newchurch Church of England Primary School

Dark Lane, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 7UA

Inspection dates:	8 and 9 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Relationships between staff and pupils at this school are warm and nurturing. Pupils celebrate and respect each other's uniqueness. They appreciate the care and support that staff provide. Pupils understand the school's expectations of their behaviour. They enjoy school and behave positively in lessons and at social times.

Overall, the school is ambitious for pupils to achieve well and to leave well prepared for the next stage of their education. It is taking swift and effective action to improve key weaknesses in pupils' learning. One of these steps includes redesigning the curriculum. However, most of the changes are new and are not fully embedded, including in the early years. As a result, pupils have gaps in their knowledge across a range of subjects. Published results in 2024 were lower than average in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as play leaders, reading buddies and school councillors. They are also eager to make a difference to the local community. For example, pupils talk passionately about the letters they wrote to their local member of parliament to discuss facilities that they felt were needed in the area. Pupils develop their interests and talents through attending a wide range of clubs, including gardening, jujitsu, sign language, computing and fencing.

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

Since the appointment of the current headteacher in 2024, the school has strengthened pupils' learning through changes to the design and delivery of the whole curriculum. It has considered staff's workload and well-being when introducing these important changes. Pupils now benefit from an ambitious curriculum that defines clearly, in order, the key knowledge that pupils should learn. However, in the early years, this curriculum is not as well defined. This means that the school has not identified with enough precision what children in the early years should learn at each stage. This hinders how well children secure the knowledge that they need for Year 1.

Typically, staff are knowledgeable and deliver the new subject curriculums consistently. This has a positive and demonstratable impact on pupils' current learning. However, the curriculum is in the early stages of being implemented and is not embedded fully. Previous weaknesses in the curriculum mean that pupils have gaps in their knowledge, which have not been addressed effectively enough.

The school is currently refining its systems to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. This makes it challenging for the school to evaluate precisely the long-term impact of the new curriculum or identify and address historic or current gaps in learning. In early years, the lack of clarity in curriculum thinking also makes it hard for the school to check that children are building on their knowledge securely.

The school works in partnership with parents and carers and external agencies to identify barriers to pupils' learning. It is tenacious in seeking, and acting upon, advice from

specialists about strategies to meet the needs of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in phonics in Year 1, and in reading at the end of Year 6, is lower than average. The school has taken action to address this through improving its reading curriculum. It has introduced a new phonics programme, which is delivered consistently by staff. As a result, pupils now read confidently and with fluency. The school has also developed new processes to identify and support pupils who find reading difficult. However, it is too early to see the long-term impact of these changes on published outcomes.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. The new behaviour policy has made a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. Staff provide effective support for pupils who struggle to manage their emotions. Pupils rise to the school's standards for behaviour. The school prioritises pupils' attendance. It works well to support families to overcome any barriers to regular attendance. The school's actions are having a strong impact on decreasing pupils' rates of absence.

The school's personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is effective. It enriches pupils' wider development through visitors to the school and trips linked to pupils' learning. Pupils learn how to look after their mental and physical health and how to keep themselves safe. The school develops pupils' understanding of fundamental British values well. Pupils explain confidently how the school helps them to recognise the importance of these values in their own lives.

Governors, some of whom are new to the role, are acutely aware of the school's areas for development. They check the impact of the school's work towards its identified priorities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of learning in the early years, the key information that children should know and the order that they should learn this is not clear. This makes it difficult for the school to ensure that the delivery of the curriculum helps children to build on their learning consistently and securely. The school should continue its work to develop the design and delivery of the early years curriculum so that children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- The curriculums across many subjects are new and not fully embedded. Consequently, pupils have key gaps in their knowledge and are not fully prepared for their next stage of education. The school should continue to embed the curriculum securely to ensure that pupils develop a deep and rich body of knowledge in all subjects.

- Across many subjects, the school's systems for checking the impact of the new curriculum are in their infancy. This hinders how well the school is able to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should continue its work to develop strategies to check that previous gaps in pupils' knowledge are closing effectively and that pupils' learning builds securely over 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

Unique reference number	119390
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10348172
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tony Abbey
Headteacher	Gemma Callaghan
Website	newchurchcofe.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has experienced changes to its leadership since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took on the role of acting headteacher in January 2024 and was appointed as headteacher in May 2024. The deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2023. The chair of governors has been in this role since December 2024.
- The school is a voluntary-controlled Church of England primary school and is part of the Diocese of Manchester. Its last inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in June 2024. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place by June 2029.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school operates before- and after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, governors, and staff at the school. The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, history and English, including early reading. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also observed pupils at lunchtime and when moving around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted's online Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff. Inspectors spoke to pupils and to staff to gather their views.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.

Inspection team

Liz Dayton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Clare Lightbown

Ofsted Inspector

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