

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary's CofE Primary School Rawtenstall

Haslingden Old Road, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 8RZ

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 March 2025

Outcome

St Mary's CofE Primary School Rawtenstall has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's is a happy, welcoming school. Staff place the warm and positive relationships that they foster with pupils at the heart of all they do. This helps children settle quickly when they start in the Reception class. Pupils know that staff want the best for them and that there is always a kind member of staff to talk to if they have any worries. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils behave well. They engage readily in lessons and show a keen interest in their learning. Pupils also behave well at other points of the day. They regularly demonstrate the school's values, which include trust, forgiveness, respect and honesty. This means that the school is a consistently calm, pleasant place to be.

The school has high expectations for pupils' academic success. Pupils work hard and typically achieve well across a range of subjects.

The school ensures that every pupil is given a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These opportunities include visits to local places of interest that help pupils to learn about their community, as well as adventurous outdoor learning trips and competing in sporting and technology challenges with other schools.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. It is carefully ordered to aid pupils' progress. The curriculum provides teachers with the guidance that they need to know what they should teach and when this should happen as pupils move through the school.

Children in the early years benefit from the well-designed curriculum. Learning activities support children to develop their knowledge, communication and language skills. They enjoy the wide range of opportunities they have to develop their physical and social skills. Staff care for the children well and help them to become independent. Children learn to share and consider the feelings of others.

The school ensures that staff have the knowledge and skills that they need to deliver the curriculum successfully. Teachers design appropriate and engaging activities that enable pupils to learn the curriculum well. Typically, staff use their strong subject knowledge to make checks on what pupils know and remember. They use this information to address any gaps that pupils may have in their learning. Typically, pupils build detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum, and as a result, they achieve well and are ready for the next stage of education.

The school has prioritised reading. Knowledgeable teachers and support staff teach the appropriately ambitious phonics curriculum effectively. As a result, the majority of pupils become successful readers. Pupils who fall behind with the expectations of the phonics programme receive the support that they need to become confident, fluent readers. Older pupils enjoy reading. They readily express their opinions about favourite novels, poetry and plays that they read.

In contrast, pupils' success in writing is not as strong. Pupils, and children in the early years, are shown how to form their letters. However, the resources that they use to practise writing are not matched well enough to their needs. This hinders their early formation of letters and the writing of words and sentences. Some pupils have misconceptions around letter formation, spelling and punctuation.

The school ensures that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified accurately. These pupils receive the help and support that they need to access the same curriculum as their peers. Pupils with SEND thrive as valued members of the school community.

The school's approach to supporting pupils' personal development is very effective. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community by taking on responsibilities, such as training to be 'buddies' for children in the early years. Older pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of fundamental British values. These pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The school has taken effective action to increase the rates of attendance for many pupils. This has been very successful. The current attendance rates are in line with national averages.

Governors carry out their roles effectively. Staff appreciate the consideration that the school has for their well-being. For example, they are given the time and resources that they need to carry out their duties.

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's expectations for pupils' early writing are not sufficiently ambitious. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 do not develop the appropriate foundations that they need for written communication. As a result, pupils' writing fluency does not improve as well as it could as they move through each year group. The school should ensure that there is an increased emphasis on pupils' writing skills and knowledge so that their writing knowledge and fluency improves to match their success in reading.

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 to be good 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in June 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

Unique reference number	119368
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10348167
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	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Karen Girling
Headteacher	Neil Gurman
Website	www.stmaryscep.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a before- and after-school club, which is run by the school.
- The school had its most recent section 48 inspection, undertaken by the Diocese of Manchester, in March 2022. The next section 48 inspection is due in the 2027/28 academic year.
- The school does not make use of 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 the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector spoke with pupils about their work and school life.
- The inspector spoke with the chair of governors, other members of the governing body, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members of staff. She also spoke with a

representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Manchester.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils as well as the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- During the inspection, the inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including plans for further school improvement. The inspector also scrutinised a range of documentation relating to behaviour.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Cleo Cunningham, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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