

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

Cheetham Hill Road, Dukinfield, Cheshire SK16 5LB

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 March 2024

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils said that they are excited to come to school each day. They thrive due to the strong relationships that they have with staff and with each other. Pupils are happy at school.

The school has high expectations of pupils' academic achievement. This includes for pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils meet the school's high standards and achieve well.

Behaviour around the school is calm and sensible. Pupils know the school's rules and try to live up to them. From the beginning of the early years, children are expected to take turns, share and listen to each other. Pupils speak kindly to others. They are seen and treated as individuals.

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy representing it at various sports tournaments. There is a wealth of clubs on offer to develop pupils' talents and interests, such as Italian and badminton. Pupils are encouraged to play an active role in their local community through various activities. This includes litter picking in the locality and singing at a nearby care home.

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

The school has designed an ambitious, well-thought-out curriculum. It has identified the important information that pupils will learn to help them know and remember more.

Teachers know the specific subject content to teach and when to deliver this knowledge. However, in a very small number of subjects, some of the activities that teachers choose do not help pupils to learn the intended curriculum well. On occasion, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to draw on their learning and apply their knowledge. This means that some pupils' knowledge is disjointed.

The school has established a range of assessment strategies to check how well pupils learn. When these are used effectively, teachers address gaps in pupils' learning well. However, on occasion, misconceptions go unchecked.

In the main, pupils achieve well. The school's published data for 2023 shows that pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was significantly below the national average. This outcome is not typical over time. The school has quickly identified the reasons for the decline in pupils' attainment. It has also taken appropriate action to resolve the issues. For example, it has prioritised staff training and revised the curriculum further to ensure that pupils learn well-ordered, small steps of knowledge. The 2023 results do not reflect the positive progress that current pupils are making through the curriculum.

The school places reading at the forefront of the curriculum. From the outset, children in the Reception Year learn letters and the sounds that they represent. Pupils learn to become confident and fluent readers in readiness for the next stage of their education. The school has ensured that pupils read from a range of diverse texts. This helps them to learn about different communities and cultures. Staff act as positive role models during shared-reading times. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about a range of texts that they have enjoyed reading.

Pupils with SEND have their additional needs identified quickly. The school provides exceptional support for pupils with more complex needs. Pupils with SEND are fully immersed in the life of the school. They achieve well.

Pupils throughout the school show excellent manners. They work and play cooperatively. During lessons, most pupils are focused and motivated. They have a thirst for learning. Pupils know the importance of attending school regularly. The school works effectively to support families if pupils' attendance rates start to decline.

The school provides a wealth of experiences and opportunities for pupils to learn beyond the academic curriculum. It helps pupils to be well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about laws, financial management and how to stay safe outside of school. Pupils take on a range of responsibilities. For example, older pupils support children in the Reception class in their roles as buddies. Pupils understand fundamental British values and apply them to their lives in school. For example, pupils spoke knowledgeably about tolerance and discrimination.

Governors understand the school's context, which helps them to support and challenge it effectively. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively. They recognise the specific issues in relation to the published data in 2023. They have worked in partnership with the school to remedy the situation.

Staff are highly appreciative of how the school manages the impact that any changes may have on their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the activities that teachers select to deliver the curriculum do not help pupils to acquire the intended knowledge. In addition, some pupils have limited opportunities to apply what they know in different contexts. This means that they do not deepen and connect their knowledge. Consequently, some pupils do not know and remember as much as they could. The school should ensure that teachers choose appropriate learning activities that help pupils to build their knowledge over time.
- In a small number of subjects, pupils' misconceptions are not routinely addressed. This is because teachers do not use the assessment strategies well enough. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. The school should make sure that teachers have the support that they need to utilise assessment strategies effectively so that pupils can build on what they know.

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 2018.

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	106240
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10291399
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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Storey
Headteacher	Claire McManus
Website	www.stmarysprimarydukinfield.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.
- This is a Roman Catholic school. It is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in March 2018. Its next section 48 inspection is due before the end of the academic year in 2026.

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 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 her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders in school. She also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, she held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with a range of pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also discussed the curriculum in other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke with pupils during meetings, lessons and at lunchtime.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also spoke with some parents and carers during the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documents, including policies, improvement documents and a sample of documents for pupils with SEND. She also looked at minutes from governing body meetings, information about pupils leaving and starting at school and records relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- 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' interest first.

Inspection team

Sheena Clark, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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