

Inspection of a good school: St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Withers Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 1DF

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 July 2021

Outcome

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Matthew's look forward to coming to school each day. This is reflected in their high rates of attendance and punctuality. St Matthew's is a happy, friendly, caring school.

Pupils get on well together. They are kind and considerate towards each other in lessons and around the school. Any occasional disagreements are sorted out quickly by adults. Pupils are confident that teachers will deal swiftly with any potential bullying so that it does not become a problem. When pupils are worried about anything, they know that adults will make the time to listen to them and find ways to help them. This makes pupils feel safe.

The school is a hive of activity. Pupils enjoy learning about the world around them and finding out about life in the past. The weekly online school assemblies provide a welcome opportunity for pupils to pray, reflect and celebrate together.

Pupils listen attentively in lessons. They pay heed to the advice that their teachers give them. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils who find learning difficult are helped to catch up. Pupils across the school progress well through the curriculum.

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

Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders have built further on the strengths identified at the previous inspection. They have appropriately prioritised the development of subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils get a broad and balanced curriculum.

Leaders are successful in their mission to 'inspire pupils to love learning'. Leaders have devised an ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have designed their curriculum plans so that pupils study a wide range of topics and concepts. As a result, pupils get a secure grounding in the subjects that they study. Pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about what they have been taught. For example, younger pupils can discuss what life was like for millworkers in Victorian Blackburn. Pupils achieve well at St Matthew's. Pupils across the school are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Despite the many strengths across the curriculum, in a minority of subjects leaders have not set out clearly enough the precise knowledge that pupils must learn and remember. Added to this, lesson activities, on occasions, are not sufficiently well designed to ensure that pupils have a deep and rich knowledge of the concepts being covered.

Children in the Reception Class get off to a flying start in reading. Across the school, teachers have strong subject knowledge to teach early reading. The phonics curriculum is delivered well. Daily phonics lessons, as well as a wealth of opportunities for pupils to practise what they have learned, ensure that pupils read with accuracy and confidence. Teachers make sure that pupils read books that match the sounds that they know. Teachers closely monitor pupils' progress. Effective support is put in place quickly for any pupils falling behind. Pupils love listening to the stories and poems that their teachers read to them. Teachers choose books that support pupils' learning across the curriculum and expose them to a wide range of children's literature.

Leaders, teachers and support staff know the pupils well. They identify any emerging needs quickly. They put suitable support in place to help these pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, catch up quickly across the curriculum. Moreover, well-considered adaptations to the curriculum enable those pupils with more profound needs to participate fully in school life. New pupils, who have recently arrived in the country, are supported well. Teachers help them to acquire the literacy and numeracy skills that they need to thrive.

The school is calm and orderly throughout the day. Leaders' high expectations for pupils' behaviour are established right from the start. The youngest children help to tidy up, take turns and share. Across the school, pupils try hard and behave well. Bullying is rare.

This year, in response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, leaders have prioritised activities that promote pupils' well-being. For example, pupils have been playing cricket and taking part in relaxation sessions.

The school's governing body has a wealth of experience and expertise. Governors used the COVID-19 catch-up funding effectively to ensure that every pupil is able to access remote education. This has minimised disruption to pupils' learning. Governors keep a close eye on staff well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders carry out the required checks to reassure themselves that staff are suitable to work with pupils. Staff undertake regular safeguarding training. They understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff are quick to report any concerns. The designated safeguarding leaders work effectively with external agencies to signpost pupils and their families to support and help as appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some leaders have not set out clearly enough the precise knowledge that pupils must learn in a minority of subjects. Added to this, the activities that some teachers plan are, on occasions, not as well designed as they should be. This hinders some pupils' progress across the curriculum in a small number of subjects. Leaders should consider more carefully what is taught in each subject and how pupils are helped to learn. This will help pupils to build their knowledge and skills systematically in all subjects.

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/outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2016.

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 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	119505
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10194791
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	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Fred Kershaw
Headteacher	Julian Rogers
Website	http://www.stmatthewsblackburn.com
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 July 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England primary school.
- The school had its most recent section 48 inspection in March 2016. The school's next section 48 inspection was due in March 2021. This inspection is overdue because of the pandemic.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and class teachers. They spoke with a diocesan representative and an officer from the local authority. They also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors considered the six responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. They spoke to parents and carers at the end of the school day. They also considered the results of the school's recent survey of parents.
- Inspectors considered the 33 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors met with the people responsible for safeguarding in the school. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. They spoke to staff,

parents and pupils about safeguarding. They also considered the survey responses from staff, parents and carers around safeguarding.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and playtimes. They spoke to pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of pupils.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors considered the school's approach to the teaching of early reading. They also explored how leaders plan and organise the science and history curriculums. They spoke to teachers and subject leaders. They visited lessons with subject leaders. They listened to pupils read. They talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books as well as other evidence of their learning.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector Her Majesty's Inspector

Alyson Middlemass Her Majesty's Inspector

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