

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

Huddersfield Road, Millbrook, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 3JL

Inspection dates:

10–11 December 2019

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong family atmosphere at St Raphael's. Staff are friendly and supportive. They have good relationships with pupils and their families. Pupils said that staff make them feel safe and valued. Pupils enjoy school.

Pupils behave well both in lessons and at breaktimes. They focus on their learning well. There is no disruption to learning. Staff deal with any small incidents of behaviour quickly. Pupils feel safe from bullying because staff act swiftly to make sure that it does not happen.

Teachers have high expectations for every pupil. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This contributes to pupils' strong achievement. In 2019, a higher proportion of Year 6 pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than in other schools nationally.

There are a range of clubs to extend pupils' learning beyond the planned curriculum. This helps pupils to develop their interests and talents. For example, pupils take part in charity work and enjoy a coding club. Older pupils develop their sense of responsibility as digital leaders. They also care for younger pupils at breaktimes, reflecting the kind and caring ethos that has been established by leaders.

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

Senior leaders and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have identified the correct areas for improvement to make pupils' learning even better. They are in the process of building upon the good practice that is already in place in the school. Leaders are open and approachable. Leaders support staff well with their workload.

All pupils achieve well in a range of subjects, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. All pupils make strong progress through the curriculum. At the end

of key stage 2 in 2019 pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was well above that of other pupils nationally.

Reading has a high priority in the school. For example, staff in the early years continue to ask children about the sounds that they have learned in their phonics work throughout the day. This helps to reinforce children's phonic knowledge. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to know at each stage in their learning. They put support in place for pupils who find reading difficult. As a result, more pupils are meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 than in previous years. All pupils know how to apply their phonic strategies when reading. However, some pupils' books do not match the sounds that they have learned. This means that they do not have enough opportunities to practise their skills before moving on to learning new sounds. As pupils progress throughout the school, they learn to read fluently and accurately.

Leaders make sure that the mathematics curriculum is challenging for all pupils. Teachers demonstrate clearly what they would like pupils to know and understand. They set high aspirations for pupils' learning. Pupils aim to meet the increasingly difficult targets that are set for their learning, including in the early years. The mathematics curriculum is designed well. It helps pupils deepen their understanding. They have lots of chances to practise their calculation knowledge and skills to solve problems.

In the early years, children have a broad range of opportunities to develop their learning across the curriculum. The curriculum in the early years is implemented well. In both the Nursery and Reception classes children are supported to achieve their individual targets. Staff are clear about what they want children to learn in all aspects of the curriculum. Activities are well designed to help children progress well through the planned curriculum.

The curriculum for subjects other than English and mathematics is developing well. Leaders are rolling out new plans for pupils' learning each term. Currently, staff make sure that topics link together. For example, the Year 4 topic on electricity lays the foundations for pupils' later learning. Pupils create simple circuits before extending their understanding in Year 6 to work with series and parallel circuits. However, the science curriculum plans do not provide a clear indication of what pupils should learn in each topic that they study. These plans do not give clear enough guidance for teachers on how to build on pupils' prior learning. This is also true for other subjects such as geography, art and computing. The lack of detail means that teachers cannot see how learning develops across topics and subjects. Leaders are at the early stage of addressing this so that learning is more meaningful for pupils.

Leaders have put in place a range of activities beyond the curriculum. For example, older pupils have residential trips to York and to an outdoor activities centre. These trips help to develop pupils' cultural understanding and to build their independence and sense of self-worth. Leaders have also put in place support for pupils' emotional well-being. They have established a 'drop in' club where pupils can discuss their worries with a member of staff. The pupils who have accessed this provision found it very helpful.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive appropriate training for safeguarding. They are watchful for any signs that pupils may be at risk. They record any concerns that they have in detail. This helps to build a comprehensive picture of pupils' needs over time. Pupils feel comfortable to share their worries with staff. They know that this will help them feel better and that staff will act on their concerns.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when online. They understand the importance of not sharing their personal information with anyone else. They also know about the dangers of contact with strangers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet coherently planned and sequenced in some subjects. However, it is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken that they are in the process of bringing this about. Although the work in pupils' books reflects the national curriculum well, the aims for some topics do not provide sufficient detail about what teachers want pupils to know and remember. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders plan for these milestones in more detail so that learning between topics and year groups further strengthens pupils' learning over time.
- Books are not matched well enough to the phonics skills for some of the lowest ability pupils in key stage 1. This means that these pupils do not make the progress that they might otherwise be capable of. Leaders should ensure that the texts that these pupils read are more closely matched to the sounds that they have learned so that they have more opportunities to consolidate their phonic knowledge.
- The transition statements were used on this inspection to confirm that pupils benefit from a good quality of education.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the 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 on 20–21 May 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're 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.

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

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| Unique reference number | 106242 |
| Local authority | Tameside |
| Inspection number | 10087704 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 227 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Mrs Catherine Bardsley |
| Headteacher | Mrs Lynn Lakner |
| Website | www.st-raphaels.tameside.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 20–21 May 2015 |

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed at the school.
- The school's last section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character took place in June 2015.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders.
- I spoke with representatives from Tameside local authority and from the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- I met with groups of pupils from across the school to ask them about safeguarding. I also met with the headteacher, governors and teachers. I reviewed documentation which included the school's safeguarding policy, register of the checks carried out on new employees and safeguarding records.
- I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils, parents, teachers and senior leaders.

- I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and took account of 37 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I also took account of 46 responses to the pupil survey and 21 responses to the staff survey.
- I considered reading, mathematics and science deeply as part of this inspection. For these subjects I spoke with the headteacher, met with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, undertook an analysis of pupils' work and visited lessons. I heard pupils read. I also looked at pupils' work in subjects across the curriculum.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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