

Inspection of a good school: St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Lowton

Cranham Avenue, Lowton, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 2PQ

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 March 2023

Outcome

St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Lowton continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are curious and keen learners. They share their thoughts and ideas articulately. Pupils enjoy taking part in discussions and learning about the world around them. They are especially interested in the impact of climate change and the steps that they can take to protect the environment.

Leaders set the bar high for pupils' academic success. In turn, pupils try their best, work hard and achieve well. They are ready for the next steps in their education.

Most pupils relish and value their time in school. They appreciate the care that they receive from staff, especially when they are worried or anxious. Pupils know the importance of sharing their concerns, either by alerting a member of staff or by using the worry boxes.

Many pupils follow the high expectations that leaders set for conduct around the school. Pupils typically treat adults and each other with consideration and respect. When bullying or other harmful behaviour is reported, leaders deal with it effectively. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils enthusiastically take responsibility for leading different aspects of school life. For example, the Aspire leaders work with teams of staff and pupils to support their nominated charities. The school council has helped to set up games equipment on the playground and the eco-warriors remind everyone to take care of the natural world.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils should know and be able to do from the time that they start in the Reception Year through to when they leave in Year 6. The curriculum is broad, interesting and ambitious. It serves to furnish pupils with the knowledge that they need to achieve well. It also acts as an effective vehicle to help pupils to understand what it means to be a positive member of British society. Pupils

explore important and mature themes that enable them to gain a view of how to treat others, regardless of any differences.

In each subject, leaders have identified what pupils should learn over time. This guidance gives teachers from the early years to Year 6 a clear steer on what should be covered by the end of each year. In most subjects, leaders have gone further. They have identified the key knowledge that pupils must know in each unit of work. This leaves teachers in no doubt about the concepts that have to be taught and emphasised until they are firmly lodged in pupils' memories.

This approach is not replicated in some other subjects. As a result, teachers do not focus closely enough on the essential knowledge that pupils must acquire. At times, the content that should be taught in these subjects is overshadowed by other curriculum activities. When this happens, some pupils do not remember what they have learned. This stops them from making links when they encounter new ideas.

Teachers abide by leaders' curriculum guidance. They typically have the knowledge that they need to teach the breadth of the curriculum. Teachers explain new ideas clearly and they use resources effectively to help pupils learn. Mostly, teachers pick up when pupils have not understood what has been taught. They reshape their questions so that pupils can overcome any misconceptions.

Reading is central to leaders' curriculum design. Opportunities for pupils to read around each subject that they study are exploited fully. This approach, alongside the ample opportunities to read for pleasure in school and at home, ensures that pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The new approach to teaching early reading is successful. Staff have been well trained so that pupils, regardless of their age, recognise sounds and letters. Those pupils who struggle to keep up with the phonics programme receive effective and timely support to catch up. The books that pupils read are matched very well to the sounds that they are learning. This helps them to practise until their phonics knowledge is secure.

Leaders have become increasingly adept at identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, early and accurately. These pupils enjoy the same high aspirations for their learning and personal development as others in the school. They are supported well to access the curriculum.

The routines to support good behaviour begin in the early years. Children in the early years happily tidy up, listen to adults and take turns when answering questions. Across other year groups, many pupils continue to follow the school rules. This ensures that classrooms are mostly calm and purposeful. However, following the COVID-19 pandemic, some pupils are struggling to return to their usual routines. A few pupils find it difficult to regulate their emotions. At times, this disturbs the learning of others. It also makes some pupils feel a little anxious, especially during breaktimes, when some pupils forget to be kind. Leaders have taken positive steps to support pupils' emotional and mental health as a strategy to improve behaviour. This is making a difference in some parts of the school, but not in others.

Pupils gain the tools to live healthy, safe and happy lives. They enjoy a range of clubs and meeting visitors to their school. For example, children in the Reception class could hardly contain their excitement at meeting members of the Fire Service as part of the carefully crafted careers day. Such events enhance pupils' learning and serve to raise their aspirations for the future.

Staff are positive about working at the school. They appreciate the steps that leaders take to promote their well-being and to help them to manage their workload. Members of the governing body have a good insight into the day-to-day life of the school. They make a positive contribution to leaders' capacity to improve the school further.

Some parents and carers expressed positive views about their child's experience at school. However, a few parents remain discontent with different aspects of school life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained. They are alert to the signs that might indicate a pupil is suffering from harm. The systems for reporting and recording concerns are understood and followed by everyone.

Leaders, including governors, maintain a comprehensive oversight of any issues, including those linked to behaviour and bullying, which could indicate a safeguarding concern. They refer their concerns when needed. Leaders engage well with external partners to make sure that pupils get the timely help that they need.

Pupils are taught about the potential risks that they might face in their everyday lives. They know how to stay safe online, how to protect their mental and physical health, and how to avoid unhealthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified the key knowledge that pupils should acquire. Sometimes, the purity of the subject content is lost to other areas of the curriculum. As a result, key concepts are not emphasised or recapped sufficiently well to ensure that they stay in pupils' memories. Leaders should refine their curriculum design further so that teachers are in no doubt about the essential concepts that pupils must know for future success.
- The new approaches to tackling the behaviour of some pupils are having variable impact. This means that some pupils have their learning interrupted. Occasionally, some pupils also feel anxious about the behaviour of others, especially in the playground. Leaders should ensure that the new ways to tackle poor behaviour are known and understood by all in the school community. This is so that everyone is aware of their role in promoting positive behaviour.

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 March 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](#)' 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	106507
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10283649
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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Christine Henshall
Headteacher	Sue Leck
Website	www.lowtonstcatherines.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a voluntary-aided Catholic school. It is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection took place in May 2016.
- Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher and a new chair of governors have taken up post.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- There is a breakfast club and after-school provision at the school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders. She also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector spoke to representatives of the local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

- The inspector considered a range of documentation that was available on the school's website or provided by leaders. She reviewed the systems for keeping pupils safe through a scrutiny of documentation and through discussions with pupils, staff, leaders, governors and parents.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour as they arrived at school and during lessons and breaktimes. She also spoke to several pupils about their views of school life.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' work, spoke to teachers and talked to pupils about their learning. The inspector also observed pupils reading to familiar adults.
- The inspector met with leaders of other subjects to consider the curriculum in these areas.

Inspection team

Jo Olsson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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