

# Inspection of St. Mary's Catholic Primary Blackbrook

Chain Lane, Blackbrook, St Helens, Merseyside WA11 9QY

---

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

---

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy in school. They told inspectors that leaders and staff care for them well. Pupils benefit from high-quality emotional support when they need it. They trust staff to help them with any worries they may have. Leaders identify and deal with any incidents of bullying effectively. Pupils feel safe in school.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. Staff understand and support pupils' individual needs well. This helps pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well.

Pupils know how leaders expect them to behave. Pupils are respectful to each other and to adults. They are attentive in lessons and play cooperatively together in the playground.

Pupils are fully involved in the life of the school. They enjoy all that it has to offer. Pupils value the opportunities to make suggestions to improve their school even further. They are proud that leaders listen to their ideas and act on their proposals.

Pupils are caring. They think deeply about topical issues, such as the plight of refugees and the impact of deforestation. Pupils genuinely want to influence others to bring about change where it is most needed. In this way, pupils learn how to become responsible and active citizens.

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

Leaders have designed a well-thought-out curriculum. The curriculum builds on children's knowledge from the early years as they move into key stage 1 and beyond. Curriculum leaders are knowledgeable about the subjects they lead. They are passionate about their subjects and aspirational for all pupils, including pupils with SEND.

Most pupils attend school regularly. They benefit fully from leaders' ambitious curriculum. However, some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. Leaders are tenacious in supporting these pupils to improve their rates of attendance.

Curriculums in many subjects are well established. Leaders ensure that staff know how to deliver these curriculums well. Leaders have broken down the essential knowledge that pupils need to gain into well-ordered steps. Teachers introduce and revisit this knowledge in a logical way. They check that pupils know and remember what they have learned. Pupils achieve well in these subjects over time.

In a small number of subjects, leaders' curriculum improvements are more recent. Their approaches to assessment are also at an earlier stage. This means that teachers' checks on whether pupils' knowledge is secure are not as effective as they

are in most other subjects. This hinders teachers in designing learning that builds on what pupils already know. Pupils do not build their knowledge in these subjects as well as they should.

Leaders are determined that children in the early years learn to communicate confidently. Staff have a strong focus on developing children's language. They engage children in purposeful conversation as they learn and play. This means that children are ready to learn to read as soon as they enter the Reception Year.

Leaders make sure that staff have the expertise they need to deliver the well-established phonics programme consistently well. Staff systematically build up pupils' reading knowledge. They carefully check on how well pupils learn new sounds. If pupils fall behind, leaders ensure that they receive effective support to catch up quickly. This helps pupils to gain the phonics knowledge they need to be successful readers.

Pupils enjoy reading. They read at home and in school frequently. Older pupils play their part in developing this positive reading culture. They act as reading buddies to younger pupils. Pupils across the school aspire to be invited to the headteacher's afternoon tea to celebrate their regular reading.

Staff know all pupils extremely well. They identify any pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Leaders' ambition for the achievement of pupils with SEND is equally high as for all other pupils.

Leaders firmly anchor pupils' personal development in the culture of the school. They prioritise preparing pupils for their future lives. Pupils learn how to respect each other's differences and points of view. They eagerly take on a range of leadership roles. These roles help pupils to play their part in creating a calm and orderly school environment where learning is not disrupted.

Governors enjoy longstanding relationships with the school and its community. They provide informed challenge and support to leaders. Staff, including those who are new to teaching, feel valued. They enjoy being part of the school team. Staff and governors are proud to serve the pupils and their families.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that keeping pupils safe is a high priority for all staff. They make sure that staff are well trained and regularly updated about their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff understand the need to be vigilant. They report any emerging worries quickly. Leaders are diligent in following up these concerns.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Other professionals visit the school and teach pupils about personal safety. Pupils act as road safety ambassadors. They play

their part in helping other pupils to recognise and manage potential risks they may face while out and about in their local community.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subjects, leaders' approaches to assessment are at an early stage. This means that some teachers do not use assessment strategies as well as they should to support pupils to remember essential subject knowledge. As a result, some pupils' learning in these subjects is uneven. Leaders should ensure that they provide teachers with suitable guidance so that teachers can design learning that builds on what pupils know and can do.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104802
<b>Local authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256021
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	420
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Peter Alcock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julia Ashton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarysblackbrook.co.uk">www.stmarysblackbrook.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school belongs to the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection under the Education Act for schools of a religious character took place in April 2018.
- Governors provide before- and after-school provision.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff.
- An inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese. She met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They looked at a range of documentation and spoke to leaders and staff. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about whether they feel safe in school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and pupils about the curriculum in a small number of other subjects.
- An inspector listened to pupils read with a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. Inspectors also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. Inspectors also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they dropped their children off at school. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.

## Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Saeeda Ishaq	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Dryland	Ofsted Inspector
Shameem Patel	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023