

Inspection of St Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School

Chappell Road, Droylsden, Manchester M43 7NA

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

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| 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 | Requires improvement |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They care about the environment and look after it well. This includes tending to the school's hens and ducks. Older pupils enjoy being special friends to the children in early years. They help them to settle into the school routines. Children in early years quickly learn how leaders expect them to behave. Older pupils also understand leaders' high expectations of them. Children and pupils behave well. This helps to make the school a calm and purposeful place to learn.

Pupils enjoy their playtimes. They can choose to be active on the playground and in the woodland area, or opt to spend their time reading in the big yellow book bus. The wide range of activities on offer help pupils to keep physically and mentally healthy.

Pupils are well cared for. They feel safe and happy in school. They know whom to turn to for support if they have any worries. Staff listen to pupils. They deal quickly and well with pupils' concerns. This includes managing the rare incidents of bullying effectively.

Leaders have improved the curriculum. They have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils achieve well across a range of subjects as a result.

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

New leaders have brought fresh impetus to improving the curriculum. They have given careful thought to what they want pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve as they move through the school. The result is a well-thought-out curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge well from early years through to key stages 1 and 2.

The curriculum is well established in several subjects. Leaders have provided teachers with the support that they need to deliver this curriculum well, including in early years. They have ensured that teachers know which content should be taught and emphasised. Teachers carefully sequence the curriculum content. They introduce, revisit and check that pupils have remembered essential knowledge. In these subjects, pupils remember previous learning and understand how this links to their current learning.

Leaders have recently revised their curriculum thinking in a small number of subjects. In some of these subjects, leaders' work to refine the curriculum is ongoing. Teachers lack clarity about what should be taught and by when. This hinders how well they use assessment strategies to identify what pupils have learned. Teachers are not as well equipped in these subjects as they are in others to plan learning that builds on pupils' prior knowledge. Pupils do not build their learning as securely over time in these subjects.

That said, the teaching of reading is secure across the school. Staff in Nursery introduce children to lots of new words through stories and play. Children build on this knowledge as they begin to learn to read in Reception Year. They are taught by staff who know how to deliver the phonics programme well. As pupils move into key stage 1, they strengthen their phonics knowledge. They practise reading using carefully chosen books that match the sounds they are learning. Pupils with gaps in their knowledge are well supported. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly.

Leaders have recently introduced a new reading programme. This inspires older pupils to read a broad range of books independently. Pupils develop secure reading knowledge as they move through the school. They apply this well to learn new knowledge in other subjects.

Leaders are adept at identifying the additional needs of pupils with SEND, including for children in early years. Teachers provide effective support for these pupils in class. This helps pupils with SEND, and their classmates, to learn without interruption.

Leaders have carefully considered pupils' wider development in the design of the curriculum. They have purposefully purchased books and resources that help pupils to explore the rich diversity of modern Britain. Pupils are taught to challenge stereotypes. They understand what it means to belong to different family units. Older pupils said, 'You can love who you love, it is your choice.'

Leaders ensure that pupils, including pupils with SEND, benefit from high-quality opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These include visits, clubs and music lessons. Pupils also take an active role in supporting others. They raise money for charity and are keen eco-champions.

Governors have improved their understanding of the school's strengths and ongoing improvement priorities. This helps them to offer leaders better informed support and challenge. Staff morale is high. Staff appreciate that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff know how to keep pupils safe. Staff are vigilant. They know how to identify the signs that may indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. They record and report any concerns promptly. Leaders take swift action to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves and each other safe. They know how to manage the risks when working and playing online. This includes how to report any concerns that they may have about online behaviour from others that makes them feel uncomfortable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of foundation subjects, leaders are still determining the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn and the order in which it should be taught. In these subjects, pupils' learning is uneven. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking and ensure that all teachers have the information that they need to deliver the subject curriculums well.
- Leaders continue to develop their approach to assessment in some subjects. Teachers do not have sufficient guidance on how to check and build on pupils' prior learning effectively in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that there are effective assessment systems in place.

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.

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.

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 | 106253 |
| Local authority | Tameside |
| Inspection number | 10226167 |
| 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 | 421 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | John Hawksworth |
| Headteacher | Connor Lavin |
| Website | www.stsrcp.school |
| Date of previous inspection | 12 and 13 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the school was last inspected, a new headteacher and chair of the governing body have been appointed.
- This school belongs to the Diocese of Salford. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2018.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff. Inspectors spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also met with representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Salford.

- 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 reading, mathematics, art and design, and history. 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 also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. Inspectors also considered the views of staff expressed 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.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by school leaders, including the school development plan, minutes from meetings of the governing body and leaders' self-evaluation document.

Inspection team

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