

Inspection of St Alban's Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Trinity Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 5BN

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
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?

St Alban's is a warm and friendly school where everyone is welcome. The secure relationships that pupils have with the nurturing staff help them to feel happy, safe and well cared for. Pupils are confident to talk to a trusted adult if they have any worries. They know that adults will listen to them and will support them to resolve their concerns.

Pupils, including children in the early years, are kind and courteous to staff and to each other. Pupils behave well in lessons and enjoy positive interactions with their friends during playtimes and lunchtimes.

Pupils are proud to attend their school and to be part of its diverse community. They relish opportunities to make a positive difference to the lives of others. For example, pupils take part in litter-picking and, through their roles in the 'A team,' raise money for charities.

The school has high expectations of what all pupils should achieve, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Since the previous inspection, the school has taken steps to strengthen the curriculum. This has enabled pupils to achieve increasingly well.

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

The school has strengthened its curriculum since the last inspection. Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum that identifies clearly what pupils should learn from the early years to Year 6. The school has considered the workload and well-being of staff when making these curriculum changes. Staff have secure subject and pedagogical knowledge. They present new information to pupils clearly and design activities that help pupils to learn the intended knowledge. Pupils progress well through the curriculum from their starting points.

The school makes checks on learning to identify how well pupils understand and retain the knowledge that has been taught. However, in some subjects, these assessment practices are still being refined. In these subjects, checks on pupils' learning are not effective enough in identifying gaps in pupils' learning, to inform future teaching.

The school has made reading a priority. Pupils read widely and often. Children in the early years eagerly gather round and become engrossed in stories as staff read to them. Staff have the knowledge and skills to be able to deliver the school's phonics programme. They provide targeted support where needed to help pupils to keep up. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they have learned. Increasingly, more pupils are becoming confident, fluent readers by the end of key stage 1.

The proportion of pupils who join the school at different points in their schooling is well above average. Many of these pupils are new to learning English as an additional language. The needs of these pupils, and those with SEND, are swiftly identified and effectively met. The school engages well with parents, carers and with external agencies.

Staff make appropriate adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum to enable pupils with SEND to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

St Alban's promotes positive attitudes to learning among pupils. Staff support and motivate pupils to keep on trying. Children in the early years concentrate for extended periods of time as they work creatively together. Pupils offer each other help and encouragement to overcome challenges. They work diligently in lessons and show pride in their work.

The school is tenacious in its work to improve the attendance of pupils who do not attend school as regularly as they should. It works closely with parents to ensure that they understand the negative impact that absence has on pupils' learning. The school has robust procedures in place to identify concerns about attendance, to understand the reasons for this and to take effective action to address these. These processes are having a positive impact on improving pupils' attendance over time.

The school has developed an effective personal, social, health and economic education curriculum that reflects the needs of the pupils and the local community. Pupils, including those with SEND, enjoy attending extra-curricular activities such as sports clubs. They broaden their experiences through, for example, completing their 'activity passports', having opportunities to hear a live orchestra and visiting museums. Pupils learn about the importance of equality and diversity. Their wider development is supported well.

Those with responsibility for governance carry out their statutory duties effectively. Since the last inspection, governors have been thorough in holding the school to account for its work to improve previously identified weaknesses. They use the information they receive about the school's work to provide effective challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that assessment strategies are used consistently and effectively in all subjects to check whether pupils have learned the intended knowledge before moving on to subsequent learning. This makes it difficult for the school to accurately identify whether pupils have secured this knowledge. The school should ensure that assessment strategies enable staff to identify and address the gaps in pupils' learning so that their knowledge builds securely over time.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	119706
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10348211
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	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Edward Baker
Headteacher	Claire Speakman and Diana Boardman (Co-Headteachers)
Website	www.stalbansrcprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 November 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been changes to the school's leadership since the previous inspection. Since September 2024, the school has two co-headteachers.
- The school is a voluntary aided Catholic school. It is part of the Diocese of Salford. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2024. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by 2029.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteachers, other leaders, governors, and a range of staff at the school. The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, history and English, including early reading. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a known adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime, lunchtime and when moving around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views about school life.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.

Inspection team

Liz Dayton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joe Dryland

Ofsted Inspector

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