

Inspection of St Martin's Catholic Primary School

St Martin's Lane, Murdishaw, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 6HZ

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including children in the early years, arrive at school happy and ready to learn. Staff forge positive relationships with pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This helps pupils to feel safe in school.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Most pupils behave well during lessons and at social times. Nonetheless, some pupils told inspectors that the behaviour of some older pupils can be boisterous at playtimes. Added to this, too many pupils do not attend school as often as they should.

The leadership team has prioritised the development of a suitably ambitious and well-designed curriculum, which meets pupils' needs. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' achievements. However, pupils, including children in the early years, do not achieve as well as they should. This is because, in some subjects, there remain weaknesses in how well the curriculum is delivered. As a result, some pupils do not have a secure base of knowledge on which they can build.

When bullying occurs, leaders deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils know that staff will listen to them and care about their well-being. Pupils benefit from a suitable range of clubs, which allows them to further develop their own interests. These include chess club, a wealth of sporting activities and a choir.

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

Newly appointed leaders have quickly gained an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve the quality of education for pupils. Alongside the governing body, leaders recognised that improvements must be made to how the curriculum is designed and delivered. Leaders have made some positive changes in this area. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that pupils benefit from a high-quality education.

Leaders and staff have redesigned the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils. For most subjects, the curriculum, including in early reading and mathematics, is ordered logically. Added to this, for the most part, staff are clear about the essential knowledge that pupils, including children in the early years, should learn.

Overall, staff are equipped well to deliver curriculum content effectively. They use their subject knowledge to design learning and select appropriate activities for pupils. However, teachers are still developing how they check on what pupils have learned. For example, in several subjects, teachers are not clear enough about how to check that pupils have understood and remembered earlier learning. This means that some pupils develop misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. As a result,

pupils, including children in the early years, do not achieve as well as they should, and many pupils are not prepared well for the next stage of their education. Leaders have ensured that there are appropriate systems in place to swiftly identify the needs of pupils with SEND. However, leaders have not ensured that all staff are suitably skilled to adapt how they deliver the curriculum to meet the needs of this group of pupils. This means that some pupils with SEND do not receive the support that they need from staff to achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. They have recently introduced a new phonics programme. Leaders have ensured that most staff are trained to deliver this programme with confidence. Pupils learn phonics from the beginning of the Reception Year, and older pupils read books with joy and enthusiasm.

Staff ensure that the books pupils read are matched closely to the sounds they have learned. This helps pupils to gain confidence in reading. Staff quickly identify those pupils who are falling behind and provide additional support. This helps these pupils to catch up with their peers. Older pupils understand the importance of reading, and they talked fondly about the books that they had read and enjoyed recently.

Children in the early years settle into school routines quickly and learn to concentrate for sustained periods. Pupils generally follow teachers' instructions, and they show respect for their peers and staff. When incidents of disruptive behaviour do occur, teachers deal with these effectively.

A considerable proportion of pupils do not attend school regularly. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. This prevents these pupils from learning the intended curriculum and achieving as well as they should.

Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from carefully selected opportunities to enhance their wider development. Pupils learn the importance of keeping fit and eating healthy foods. They can participate in many competitions, including netball, football, dance and orienteering. Pupils enjoy their many leadership roles in school, such as acting as sports ambassadors, as representatives on the school council and taking on the role of 'head pupil'.

Staff comment that they feel well supported by leaders and governors to manage their workload and look after their well-being. Governors offer an appropriate level of challenge and support to leaders. Members of the governing body play an active part in school life, and they ask suitable questions to understand the impact of leaders' decisions on the quality of education for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to be alert to any issues regarding pupils' safety. Staff know what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns and take prompt action in line with leaders' procedures.

Leaders work well with a range of other agencies to provide pupils and their families with valuable support.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to understand risks and learn how to keep themselves safe. For instance, pupils learn how to protect themselves from harm when working and playing online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In several curriculum subjects, teachers do not check sufficiently well that pupils have learned and understood previous curriculum content. This means that pupils develop gaps or misconceptions in their learning. Leaders should ensure that staff are supported to identify and address pupils' misconceptions and the gaps in their knowledge so that pupils can build securely on what they know already.
- Some staff do not have the confidence or expertise to adapt how they deliver the curriculum for pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn the curriculum as well they should. Leaders should support staff to gain the confidence and skills that they need to ensure that they adapt their delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Too many pupils, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school as often as they should. This means that they miss out on important learning. Leaders should ensure that they continue to support these pupils and their families so that pupils' rates of attendance improve.

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	111380
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10289999
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	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gillian Walton
Headteacher	Catherine Ming
Website	www.st-martins.halton.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not currently make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The governing body provides a breakfast club and an after-school club for pupils.
- The school is a Roman Catholic primary school and is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The school's previous section 48 inspection took place in June 2019.

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 the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and staff in school. They spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.

Inspectors spoke with representatives of both the local authority and the diocese. They also spoke with the school's improvement partner.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, art and design, and history. They spoke with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the documentation provided by leaders, including leaders' improvement plan and self-evaluation documents. They also reviewed minutes from meetings of the governing body and a range of documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors also spoke with leaders from other areas of the curriculum. They looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils.
- An inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed children's and pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and at lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors evaluated leaders' safeguarding arrangements and scrutinised leaders' safeguarding records.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they dropped their children off at school. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Clare Baron, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Shameem Patel	Ofsted Inspector
Sheila Iwaskow	His Majesty's Inspector

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