

Inspection of St Veronica's Roman Catholic Primary School, Helmshore

Raven Avenue, Helmshore, Lancashire BB4 4EZ

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 11 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud to belong to this welcoming school. They told inspectors how much they appreciate the varied experiences that the school provides. This includes opportunities for pupils to practise their sewing skills or to be part of the chaplaincy team. Through activities such as these, pupils strengthen their talents and develop new interests. Pupils also understand the benefits of regular physical activities. For example, they value times when they can access the school's outdoor wooded area.

Pupils are considerate and kind. They have a secure understanding of diversity and how this enriches society. Pupils' positive behaviour in class and during social times enhances the calm and orderly atmosphere around the school.

The school has high expectations for the academic achievement of all pupils. Pupils typically achieve well across a range of subjects. They are well prepared for the demands of secondary school.

Pupils know that the school expects them to try their best. They described how the school helps them if they are worried or find aspects of their learning difficult. Staff understand individual pupils' needs well. They make sure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from everything that the school has to offer.

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

The school's curriculum is well organised and ambitious. It is designed to support pupils to build on what they have learned in previous years. The school makes sure that children settle quickly in the Reception Year and that they develop secure knowledge across all areas of learning. Pupils benefit from this firm foundation as they progress into key stages 1 and 2. In most subjects, pupils develop a rich body of knowledge.

Pupils' achievement in a small number of subjects is not as strong. This is because in these subjects, the school has not ensured that teachers have enough clarity about the essential knowledge that pupils should learn. On occasion, some pupils become confused about which key facts they need to know and remember as a result.

The lack of clarity about curriculum content in these subjects sometimes hinders how well teachers check that pupils understand their learning. When this happens, a few pupils develop misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge. Consequently, these pupils are not as well prepared as they could be for their next stage of learning.

Reading is a high priority within the school's curriculum. All staff are trained to deliver the school's phonics programme successfully. Children in the early years embrace their phonics learning. They relish exploring well-loved stories, songs and

rhymes together. By the end of Year 1, most pupils use their secure phonics knowledge to read familiar and unfamiliar words quickly and accurately. Pupils hone their reading skills by practising with books that are well matched to the sounds that they know. Skilled staff provide effective support to the small number of pupils who need additional help to secure strong phonics knowledge. This includes pupils in key stage 2 who find reading a challenge. As a result, most pupils become fluent and accurate readers by the end of Year 6.

Pupils continue to expand their reading knowledge in key stage 2 through exposure to a range of high-quality literature. They enjoy reading. However, there is inconsistency in how effectively teachers support pupils to develop a love of reading. This impacts on how well some pupils deepen their knowledge across the curriculum because they do not read for pleasure regularly.

The school makes sure that pupils' additional needs, including SEND, are swiftly and accurately identified. This enables teachers to provide appropriate support for these pupils to access the curriculum and the wider life of the school. Pupils with SEND achieve well as a result.

Pupils' conduct is strong. They behave well during lessons and they demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Year 6 pupils are patient with those from younger age groups. They carry out their buddy roles with children in the early years diligently, including reading with them each morning.

Pupils benefit from the school's strong focus on many aspects of their wider development. For example, pupils enjoy contributing to the school and wider community, including engaging in external projects. However, despite their strong advocacy for diversity, pupils' understanding of practices and customs of faiths and traditions, other than their own, is variable. As a result, the curriculum does not prepare pupils as well as it could to be an active citizen in a modern and diverse society when they are older.

Governors provide effective support to the school. They place a high priority on staff's well-being. However, they do not help the school focus well enough on how its systems and procedures are working, including how workload is managed. For example, the school does not check sufficiently well that teachers deliver the curriculum as expected. Occasionally, this prevents the school from identifying the most accurate priorities to further improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the school has not clarified the detail of what

pupils need to learn and the order in which this should occur. This impacts on how effectively teachers check and ensure that pupils learn what they most need to. As a result, at times, some pupils' knowledge is not as secure as it could be across the curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers have sufficient clarity about the essential knowledge that pupils should learn and when this content should be taught.

- The school's arrangements for checking on the quality of education that pupils receive are not as effective as they could be. On occasion, this limits how well the school defines its priorities and allocates its resources. The school should consider how it can gather the accurate and up-to-date information that it needs to evaluate the impact of the curriculum more effectively.
- The school does not ensure that pupils develop a secure understanding and appreciation of a wide range of cultures. This limits how well pupils are prepared for living in a modern and diverse society. The school should ensure that pupils develop secure understanding of cultures other than their own.

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	119589
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10314018
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	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Hough
Headteacher	Nicola White
Website	www.st-veronicas.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 March 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the time of the last inspection.
- There is a new chair of governors in post since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in April 2019. The school is awaiting confirmation from the diocese about its next section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's educational provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the

school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. An inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and history. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. They also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors also spoke with pupils about their learning in other subjects. They looked at samples of pupils' work from across the curriculum.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. An inspector also scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- An inspector visited the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachael Alarcon

Ofsted Inspector

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