

Inspection of a good school: Overton St Helen's Church of England Primary School

Lancaster Road, Overton, Morecambe, Lancashire LA3 3EZ

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2023

Outcome

Overton St Helen's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to school to meet their friends and to join in the interesting activities that staff provide for them. Pupils arrive each day happy and eager to learn. They thrive in this welcoming school where they feel valued and safe.

Leaders and teachers bring pupils' learning to life. For example, a recent drama workshop about Ancient Egypt enriched pupils' understanding of their history topic, while a visit to a local nature reserve supported pupils' understanding of animals and habitats. After-school clubs and visits to outdoor centres enable pupils to develop their wider interests and talents.

Pupils know that leaders expect them to behave well. Lessons are a calm, purposeful, hubbub of activity where pupils are engrossed in their learning. Pupils work well independently and with others. These positive attitudes mean that pupils can learn without disruption. If bullying happens, leaders deal with it effectively.

Leaders are ambitious for what all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), should achieve. Most pupils achieve well.

Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities. From the start of their time in the early years, children are trusted with simple classroom tasks. Older pupils contribute to the life of the school by acting as school councillors and as buddies to the younger children. This helps pupils to grow in confidence.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that promotes pupils' personal development, as well as their academic progress.

In most subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. As a result, teachers know what pupils must learn and when this will happen. This allows pupils to build their knowledge securely over time. However, this is not the case in a small number of subjects. This means that teachers are less sure about how to design learning that helps pupils learn all that they should.

Teachers present new learning clearly. They check that pupils have learned what has been taught and they reshape their teaching when they spot that pupils are unclear about new ideas and concepts.

In most subjects, teachers make sure that there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and recall their earlier learning. In these subjects, pupils readily remember what they have learned. However, at times, pupils have less opportunity to revisit what they know. They struggle to remember what they have learned. This causes them problems when they begin to tackle increasingly difficult tasks.

Right from the start of the early years through to Year 6, children and pupils learn to understand and respect the differences between people. They learn about different faiths and cultures.

Reading has a high priority across the school. The reading curriculum is carefully crafted to make sure that pupils have the vocabulary that they need to understand what they read. This begins in the early years where staff expertly develop and extend children's vocabulary and early language skills.

Teachers inspire pupils to become avid readers. For example, pupils enjoy reading widely to earn reading awards. Pupils enjoy listening to their teachers read. Older pupils talked enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. They practise reading often and they encourage younger readers through regular reading buddy sessions.

Well-trained staff deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Children in the early years systematically learn the letters that sounds represent. The books that pupils read contain the sounds they learn in class. This helps them to become increasingly confident and fluent when they are reading. Teachers regularly check that pupils know the sounds that they have been taught. They put effective and swift support into place for those pupils who struggle to keep pace with the curriculum.

Children in the early years settle into school and quickly learn what is expected of their behaviour. They are kind to each other in their play. Older pupils behave sensibly in lessons, at playtimes and when moving round school. They are well mannered and respectful to adults and to each other. They listen carefully and carry out instructions straight away.

Teachers work closely with parents, carers and specialist professionals to identify pupils with SEND quickly. Teachers adapt their teaching effectively so that these pupils can access the curriculum and the wider life of the school. Parents of pupils with SEND value the support that their children receive.

Governors know the school well. They hold leaders to account effectively for the quality of education.

Staff appreciate leaders' endeavours to support their professional development, workload and well-being. They are proud to be part of the Overton team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding. They know the procedures for reporting their concerns, which leaders act on decisively. Leaders work closely with other professionals to make sure that pupils get the support that they need quickly.

Leaders understand the risks and dangers that pupils may face in the local area. The curriculum supports pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes staying safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, pupils do not have enough opportunity to practise and revisit earlier learning. This hinders them from linking what they have already learned to new knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers are trained well to help pupils secure their prior knowledge so that they can recall what they have learned quickly.
- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified what they want pupils to know. This hampers teachers from designing learning that builds on what pupils already know and can do. Leaders should ensure that they make it clear to teachers what pupils should learn and when this should happen.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2013.

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	119539
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10256216
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	William Anthony Mashiter
Headteacher	Joanne Easthope
Website	www.st-helens.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England voluntary-aided primary school. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2017.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation, including the single central record. She spoke with staff to check how well they understood their safeguarding responsibilities.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and design and technology. The inspector spoke with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke with teachers and some pupils about their learning. The inspectors also reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.

- The inspector observed some pupils and children read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime and playtimes.
- The inspector spoke with some members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- The inspector spoke with parents to gather their views about the school and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector spoke with staff to gather their views about their workload and well-being, and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Morley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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