

Inspection of a good school: Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Rochdale

Kingsway, Rochdale, Lancashire OL16 4AW

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 June 2024

Outcome

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Rochdale continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this school. They told the inspector that they make friends quickly. They appreciate the learning experiences that their teachers provide. Pupils know that there are trusted adults in school to talk with if they have any worries or concerns.

Most pupils rise to meet the school's high expectations for their achievement. Typically, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, achieve well.

Pupils behave well during lessons and at social times. They explained the school's rule for them to be 'safe, ready, respected' each day. Across school, learning and play environments are calm and purposeful. Pupils know some of the many ways that make them unique. They respect the differences that exist between themselves and others.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities that support their wider development. For example, the school provides pupils with a bespoke award in Years 1 and 5, to develop their skills in social endeavour. Pupils enjoy clubs in Spanish, dance, sports, choir, computing and art. They visit theatres, art galleries, beaches, farms and a variety of places further afield. These experiences enrich pupils' learning in the curriculum.

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

The school has designed a broad and ambitious curriculum, with appropriate support and challenge from the governing body. It has determined the small steps of knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which this should happen. This allows pupils to build successfully on their previous learning. Children in the early years develop secure foundations in readiness for learning in key stage 1.

Staff receive effective training and support, which helps them to further improve their subject knowledge and their implementation of the curriculum. Staff choose appropriate learning activities and check that pupils learn the intended curriculum well. Mostly, teachers provide pupils with clear explanations when delivering new concepts. However, in some subjects, they do not give a strong enough emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary. This hinders some pupils in embedding some of their learning into their long-term memory.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND early. Staff work with parents and carers, and with external professionals, to support pupils effectively. This means that pupils with SEND, and those who are disadvantaged, learn well alongside their peers. The school makes sure that these pupils benefit from the school's wider offer.

The school has prioritised reading. The curriculum is centred around carefully chosen, high-quality texts. Pupils enjoy visiting the school's book areas, and some pupils take on the roles of librarians to keep these spaces tidy and inviting. Staff read to their classes each day to foster pupils' love of reading. Pupils said that they enjoy reading to their friends.

In the Nursery class, children develop their knowledge of spoken language through plentiful stories and warm, nurturing interactions with staff. This helps to prepare children for phonics, which begins in the Reception class. Staff follow the phonics programme with fidelity and provide pupils with books that match their current phonics knowledge. Most pupils develop into fluent readers. However, some of the strategies that staff use to support pupils who struggle with reading are not fully effective. This means that some pupils do not learn to read with fluency and accuracy as quickly as they could.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They attend school regularly and understand why this is important. The school has been successful in reducing rates of absence. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning, beginning from the start of the early years. They aspire to different future careers, including as teachers, therapists and scientists.

Pupils' education goes beyond the academic curriculum. They take on a variety of leadership roles in school, for example as school councillors, subject ambassadors and leaders in worship and play. Pupils learn about staying safe and how to support their own physical and mental health. They help in the community by fundraising for charities, collecting for foodbanks, visiting care homes and litter picking in the local area.

Staff said that they are proud to work at a school that is like a family to them. They value the school's consideration for their workload and well-being, for example by having their opinions considered in a well-being committee, particularly regarding workload. Many parents are happy with the school and the support that it provides for their children. However, this is not the case for a small number of parents. They said that some of the concerns that they have raised with the school have not been resolved sufficiently well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not focus enough on helping pupils to learn and remember subject-specific vocabulary. This causes some gaps in pupils' knowledge and hinders their understanding of concepts and subject content. The school should ensure that staff support pupils in embedding subject-specific knowledge, so that they know and remember more.
- Occasionally, staff do not support some pupils who struggle with their reading as effectively as they could. This limits these pupils in how quickly they learn to read fluently and accurately. The school should support staff in using early reading strategies consistently well.
- A small number of parents expressed some dissatisfaction with the school. These parents reported that the school does not address their concerns sufficiently well. The school should strengthen partnership working with parents, so that parents are assured that any worries that they may have will be resolved in a timely manner.

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 good. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2019.

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	105828
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10347989
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	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth Taylor
Headteacher	Pamela Dungworth
Website	www.sacred-heart-school.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This Roman Catholic school is in the Diocese of Salford. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in May 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before May 2026.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to the school's governance arrangements, including the appointment of a new chair of governors.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken this into account in his evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher and other school leaders. He held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers. He spoke with some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The inspector also reviewed curriculum documentation and spoke with pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- The inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read with a familiar adult. He discussed reading with a group of older pupils.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school, including at breakfast club, at playtime and during lunchtime.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. He also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and documents pertaining to pupils' behaviour and levels of attendance.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. He spoke with staff about their workload and their well-being.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. He spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. He considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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