

Inspection of The District CofE Primary School

Patterson Street, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside, WA12 9PZ

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told inspectors that they feel happy and safe in school. They are very proud to be a member of the school community. Pupils know that they can speak to any member of staff if they are worried or concerned about anything.

Pupils are motivated to work hard because they enjoy their learning. They respond positively to the high expectations that staff have of their learning and behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that life in school is 'calm and peaceful' and that, on the rare occasions that bullying happens, it is always dealt with swiftly.

Pupils understand what it means to be a positive member of British society. They are expected to be upstanding, considerate citizens in school and the wider community. Pupils have many opportunities to rise to these expectations as head pupils, members of the 'Stars Leadership Team', the school council and as play leaders. Pupils raise funds for various good causes. The school choir regularly performs at various events in the local library, a residential care home and St. John's Church.

Pupils' determination to succeed, and their increasing resilience when learning, means that they achieve well across the curriculum.

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

Leaders and staff are determined to give every pupil the best chance to succeed. Governors know where the school's strengths lie. They have a clear overview of the curriculum's effectiveness and support leaders' high ambitions for pupils. Parents and carers are highly positive about their children's progress, the breadth of extra-curricular activities and the school's 'excellent core values'.

Leaders ensure that pupils are happy and productive members of the local community and wider society. The work that staff do to promote pupils' physical health, mental well-being, spiritual, moral and cultural understanding and character is exemplary. Pupils are reflective, caring and considerate of others. They have a thorough understanding of British values. Pupils demonstrated this when they talked with inspectors about Black History Month, Neurodiversity Week and the harmful effects of racism and sexism.

Leaders ensure that the children in early years, including the two- and three-year-old children in the pre-school, have a strong start to their education. Pupils, including children in the early years, behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. For example, children who started the Reception Year in September have settled very well into routines. They follow instructions carefully and enjoy discovering new things with their peers.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Teachers encourage pupils to read a wide range of literature, including fiction and poetry. Pupils who read to inspectors did so with authority and excitement. The phonics programme is ordered carefully. It is taught by well-trained staff, so that children and pupils gain a secure knowledge of phonics. Reading books are matched to the sounds that pupils know. Pupils read with fluency and accuracy.

Support for those in the early stages of speaking English as an additional language, and those who need to catch up to their peers, is highly effective. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and well catered for by well-trained, caring staff. Staff's expertise and their well-developed relationships with parents and specialist partners ensure that pupils with SEND achieve well across the curriculum.

Leaders have developed a broad, rich, and well-ordered curriculum that engages pupils and helps them to know and remember more of their previous learning. Teachers are clear about what content should be taught and when this should be covered. This enables pupils to build on their knowledge as they move through topics and year groups. For example, in history, Year 1 pupils begin to place artefacts chronologically. Teachers build on this knowledge with older pupils, using timelines to highlight specific periods in history, including the Victorian era, and events such as The Great Fire of London.

Through a programme of focused training and development, staff have the confidence and subject knowledge that they need to teach different subjects. For example, they help pupils to deepen their understanding in mathematics by revisiting prior learning and practising multiplication tables. Teachers are skilled in developing pupils' vocabulary so that they can talk about scientific processes accurately and with confidence.

Assessment information is used well in most subjects to identify what pupils know and can do. For example, assessments are helping teachers to identify where extra support is needed for pupils and those at risk of falling behind in their learning. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the systems to check on pupils' learning in other subjects are still in their infancy. This means that leaders do not have a clear understanding of how well pupils know and remember what has been taught.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant about the safety and welfare of pupils. They are familiar with the school's policies and procedures as well as the government's latest guidance on keeping pupils safe in education. Leaders collaborate closely with other agencies and partners to make sure that pupils get the support that they need.

Staff are proficient at spotting potential signs of neglect or abuse. They leave nothing to chance and use the school's efficient systems for recording their

concerns. Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils know how to use the internet safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The assessment systems in some subjects are in the process of being developed. This means that leaders do not have a strong enough understanding of how well pupils are learning the planned curriculum. This stops teachers from spotting gaps and helping pupils to catch up if they fall behind. Leaders should ensure that there are clear systems in place to check on pupils' learning. They will also need to make sure that staff are well equipped to use the new systems, so that they can help pupils overcome any gaps in their learning.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

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| Unique reference number | 104792 |
| Local authority | St Helens |
| Inspection number | 10204398 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 317 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Frank Maguire |
| Headteacher | Lavern Shelford |
| Website | www.district.st-helens.sch.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | 15 – 16 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new head teacher and a new chair of the governing body have been appointed.
- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection was carried out in March 2016.
- The school uses one alternative provider to support a small group of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with two governors and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives into early reading, mathematics, science, design and technology and history. For each deep dive, inspectors looked at curriculum planning and spoke to leaders about their subjects. They conducted joint lesson visits with leaders, spoke with pupils and looked at a range of pupils' work. Inspectors also talked with class teachers and teaching assistants from the classes that they visited.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They spoke to parents to gather their views about the school. They also considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the free-text comments. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors examined a range of policies, schemes of work and curriculum plans. They also scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy. The lead inspector spoke to the safeguarding leader about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.

Inspection team

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|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Lenford White, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Julie Bather | Ofsted Inspector |
| James Marsh | Ofsted Inspector |

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