

# Inspection of a good school: Leigh St Mary's CofE Primary School

Walmesley Road, Leigh, Lancashire WN7 1YE

---

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 June 2024

## **Outcome**

Leigh St Mary's CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy and settled at this friendly and nurturing school. They told the inspector that teachers make their learning fun, which contributes to why they are eager to attend school. Pupils know that staff care for them and are readily available to support them.

Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), rise to meet the school's high expectations for their achievement. They achieve well. Pupils appreciate receiving recognition for their hard work, such as being awarded badges and certificates.

Classrooms are calm and purposeful learning environments. Pupils behave well across school. They try hard to follow the school's 'diamond rules', including to be respectful and caring towards others. Pupils said that they treat everybody equally in their school.

The school provides pupils with a range of rich opportunities. For example, they visit the church, library, museums and places of interest in the local area and further afield. Pupils can participate in sports clubs, art club and the choir. They enjoy performing in dance and drama shows, including with other local schools. Older pupils benefit from music tuition.

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

The school has implemented a broad and balanced curriculum. Subject curriculums break down the ambitious content into the small steps of knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which this should happen. The curriculum includes references to the rich heritage of the local area.

In 2023, pupils' attainment in some subjects at the end of Year 6 was significantly below national averages. Some pupils in this year group had complex needs and the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in gaps in their knowledge. They did not have

the time that they needed to catch up sufficiently. However, most current pupils achieve well.

Staff benefit from effective training and support that help them to further their subject knowledge. Typically, they use appropriate learning activities and give clear explanations to deliver curriculum content successfully. In most subjects, they check that pupils learn the intended curriculum content well. However, in some subjects, assessment strategies do not focus enough on the specific knowledge that pupils should learn. This hinders some pupils from learning all that they should. This is because staff do not address some gaps in their knowledge.

Staff identify pupils' additional needs quickly. The school works successfully with external specialists, and with parents and carers, to support pupils with SEND to learn alongside their peers. These pupils follow the full curriculum and join in with the life of the school. Staff give effective support to pupils who access the school's 'nurture classroom' so that they are ready to learn.

The school has prioritised reading. It has recently redeveloped the ways that it fosters pupils' love of reading. High-quality texts are central to the school's curriculum. Inviting book areas are stocked with a diverse range of texts. Pupils spoke of their favourite books and authors. They read widely and often. Some pupils aspire to be authors themselves.

Pupils begin to learn phonics from the beginning of the Reception class. Staff have undertaken training which enables them to follow the well-established phonics programme with fidelity. Most pupils read from books that match their current phonics knowledge, which helps them to develop into confident readers. However, on occasions, some staff do not deliver the phonics programme consistently well. As a result, some pupils, especially those who find reading difficult, do not learn to read with fluency and accuracy as quickly as they should.

The school uses effective strategies to ensure that pupils attend regularly and on time. It works well with parents and with local agencies to reduce levels of absence. Pupils are polite and have positive attitudes towards their learning. They were keen to discuss their learning with the inspector.

The school supports pupils' wider development well. Pupils learn about responsibility by taking on leadership roles in school, for example as worship leaders, sports captains and 'buddies' for younger pupils. They act as advocates in their positions as 'diamond champions', such as by recycling, litter picking and looking after the environment. Pupils also visit a local care home. They have raised money for people who are in need.

The governing body supports and challenges the school well. Governors have a focus on the quality of education that the school provides for pupils. The school and the governing body are mindful of staff's well-being. Staff said that they enjoy working at the school. The school helps them to fulfil their roles well, for instance through a revised approach to marking and feedback.

## 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, the strategies that teachers use to check how well pupils are learning do not focus on the most important knowledge that pupils should learn. This means that some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge, which remain over time. The school should refine its approach to assessment in these subjects to check that pupils learn everything that they need to know.
- At times, some staff do not deliver the phonics programme as well as they should. This hinders some pupils, particularly those who struggle with reading, from learning all that they should to become fluent and accurate readers. The school should support staff in implementing effective early reading strategies consistently well.

## 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 July 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106516
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	10348040
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ashley Turner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Watson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.leighstmarys.co.uk">www.leighstmarys.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	10 and 11 July 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.
- This Church of England school is in the Diocese of Manchester. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in November 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before November 2026.

## 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 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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and

history. 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 looked at 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 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 observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school, including at breakfast club and during playtime and lunchtime.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other leaders of the school. 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.
- 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.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents, 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 well-being.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

## **Inspection team**

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024