

Inspection of St Aidan's Primary School – A Church of England Academy

Norfolk Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 4EW

Inspection dates: 14–15 January 2020

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have transformed this school. In the past, many pupils have underachieved. They moved on to Year 7 without the knowledge and the skills that they needed to succeed. This situation has changed. Pupils now achieve well across the full range of national curriculum subjects. Their work in history, science, mathematics, reading and writing shows how much the quality of education has improved. Their work on the Stone Age is particularly impressive. Pupils enjoy their physical education lessons. They talked about following the daily mile in the footsteps around the school yard. Teachers and sports coaches promote healthy eating and exercise well.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn the same subjects as all other pupils. They achieve well. In 2019, many more disadvantaged pupils attained higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils at the end of Year 6.

Pupils are happy, and they feel safe at school. They concentrate in lessons. Teachers deal well with any behaviour issues. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and they respond well to teachers' requests. There has been some bullying and name-calling. Pupils said that staff have followed up and dealt well with the issues. Staff help pupils to develop respect for people from other cultures and religions.

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

Almost all children start school with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for four-year-olds. The curriculum and the quality of education in early years are good. Children learn well across different areas of learning. They are keen and behave well. Children sit captivated at the end of the day listening to the teacher reading stories. In personal, social and emotional development (PSED), teachers show children how to be healthy. Children learn some important social skills, such as sharing and how to respect others.

Leaders know that in the past, pupils have not been able to read as well as they should. Pupils' attainment has been too low at the end of Year 6. Phonics is taught well so that young children and pupils know the sounds that letters represent. Staff make sure that the reading books match pupils' reading abilities. There are high-quality books in each classroom and in the library. Pupils enjoy books and read frequently. Leaders have re-shaped the reading curriculum to better develop pupils' comprehension skills. It is working. Standards are rising quickly. By the end of Year 1, almost every pupil reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved in each of the last three years.

Pupils also develop their reading comprehension skills in other subjects. In history, for example, pupils recently read an extract written by a monk describing ancient Baghdad. There is a good focus on helping children to catch up if they fall behind in their reading. Pupils with SEND get the support they need to help them to become more fluent readers.

Two aspects hinder pupils' achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and some other subjects. One is their attendance. In 2019, most of the pupils with below-average attendance did not meet the expected standard at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. They missed out on too much teaching. The second is pupils' spelling. Pupils, in the past, have not had the teaching that they needed to spell accurately. Pupils across the school make too many spelling mistakes. The structure and quality of pupils' writing have improved. Pupils' work shows that they can write well-punctuated sentences. They use grammar well and different types of sentence.

Leaders, including trustees, have turned the school around. This is partly because of the undoubted skills of senior leaders and subject leaders. They have made good use of specialists from other schools and from within the trust to re-shape and improve the curriculum.

The curriculum is now well designed and well structured. Teachers use the new curriculum to build pupils' knowledge and skills over time in each subject. Teachers develop pupils' character. They show pupils that they can learn from any mistakes that they make. They build pupils' resilience. Teachers have high expectations in each subject. They have identified what they want pupils to know at the end of each topic, term and year.

Pupils behave well. They have positive attitudes and work hard in lessons. Teachers can get on with their teaching with little interruption.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn to respect the many differences between people. Teachers help pupils to develop a good sense of fairness and justice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority. Staff have the knowledge that they need to recognise when a family or pupil may be vulnerable. Staff make sure that the site is safe and secure. They work well with specialists such as nurses and social workers. The safety of children looked after is a priority. Staff make sure that they have the support that they need. The school's safeguarding documentation is thorough and detailed. Leaders ensure that staff know how to report and record any safeguarding incidents or concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' attendance is well below average. Most of the Year 2 and Year 6 pupils who did not attain the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2019 had attendance well below the average. Too many pupils are absent too often. Low attendance is having a negative impact on some pupils' achievement

across the curriculum. The school should work with its partners, particularly parents and carers, to raise attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.

- In the past, pupils' attainment has been well below average. Children and younger pupils have not developed their phonics knowledge well enough to accurately spell known and unknown words. Current pupils' spelling is weak. Weak spelling is having an impact in pupils' fluency and accuracy in writing when pupils move into key stage 2. Leaders should create a strategy to improve pupils' spelling accuracy. They should also build on their successful work with the curriculum in order to improve pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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

Unique reference number	141350
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10121994
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Anona Pearson
Headteacher	Deborah Greenwood
Website	www.staidansblackburn.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 September 2017 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there is a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leader for English.
- St Aidan's is a Church of England school. Its last section 48 inspection took place on 16 March 2018.
- There is a breakfast club on the school site.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We considered how well the school protects and safeguards pupils. To do this, we checked the security of the school buildings. We looked at how the leaders check that staff and adults have the right clearance to work with pupils. We considered the views of parents and pupils about safeguarding. We spoke with representatives of the governing body and we looked at safeguarding documentation.

- As part of this inspection, we looked in detail at six subjects: history, science, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, reading, writing and mathematics. In these subjects, we visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. We listened to pupils reading. We also held discussions with teachers and leaders.
- We met with the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust. We also met with a representative of the local authority.
- We met with pupils to discuss learning and behaviour.
- We spoke with parents at the end of the school day. We also considered the responses to the school's own parent survey.
- We considered the views of staff by speaking with groups of teachers. We also considered the 18 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Allan Torr, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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