

Inspection of a good school: Accrington St Christopher's Church of England High School

Queen's Road West, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 4AY

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 March 2022

Outcome

Accrington St Christopher's Church of England High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At St Christopher's, the school's values weave through all aspects of school life. Pupils and students in the sixth form are happy here. They like each other and treat each other with respect and kindness, regardless of ethnicity, gender or culture.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that leaders will act to address any incidents of bullying. Pupils said that teachers deal well with any concerns.

Teachers' expectations of pupils' and students' behaviour and learning are high. Classrooms, corridors and social areas are calm and welcoming for pupils. Pupils work hard and try their best. Leaders recognise pupils' efforts with a wide array of rewards. Pupils value the support that their teachers give them. Pupils move on to high-quality destinations at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5.

In the sixth form, students contribute to the wider work of the school. For example, they support younger pupils with reading. Students feel valued and take pride in the work that they do.

Younger pupils also demonstrate a strong commitment to the school community. With the support of sixth-form students, they engage in leadership roles and charity events. Many pupils receive Active Citizenship awards for their service to the community. Pupils wear their award badges with pride.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of music and sports clubs that take place at lunchtime and after school. The eco club and the choir are particularly popular with pupils.

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

Leaders aim to prepare pupils for life in the modern world and help them to understand what it means to be responsible citizens. Since the previous inspection, leaders have thoughtfully redesigned the curriculum so that pupils can build knowledge effectively on their previous learning.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum at key stage 3 is at least as ambitious as the national curriculum. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, there is a broad range of subjects for pupils and students to choose from. Leaders encourage pupils to take the full range of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate suite.

Teachers appreciate the opportunity to think deeply about how pupils learn. Leaders ensure that teachers develop their knowledge of the curriculum. Teachers use their expertise to identify the key knowledge that pupils need. This helps pupils, including students in the sixth form, to strengthen their knowledge and deepen their understanding.

Leaders organise learning for pupils carefully across all key stages. This ensures that pupils build on what they know already. Typically, teachers check carefully for any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers use this information to adapt teaching so that pupils can gain or recover any learning that they have missed or forgotten. This effective support helps pupils to remember more of the curriculum. Pupils behave well, lessons are rarely disrupted and teachers can focus on delivering the curriculum effectively.

Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified swiftly and accurately. Leaders have provided teachers with a variety of strategies to help this group of pupils to access the full curriculum. Teachers have valued this training. They are skilled at supporting pupils with SEND in lessons.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, some pupils are not reading as fluently and accurately as they should. Leaders have provided more time during the school day for pupils to read with teachers. Most pupils are catching up quickly. However, leaders are still in the early stages of deciding how best to support those pupils who struggle the most with reading.

Pupils learn about the features of healthy relationships. For example, they said that they understand the importance of consent. Pupils value democracy and see its benefits through the work of the school council. They understand the impact of prejudice on others.

All pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from the many opportunities on offer outside their classroom learning. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, engage well with these activities. For example, many pupils are active school councillors and sports leaders. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme begins in the lower school and continues into the sixth form.

Careers guidance is well established across the school. This guidance is particularly strong in Years 9, 11 and 13, when pupils are considering their next steps. All pupils move on to appropriate, high-quality destinations at the end of their time at the school.

Teachers are very proud to be part of the school. They said that leaders are considerate of their workload. Staff described the school as a happy place to work and they feel valued by leaders. Staff believe that due consideration is given to their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are well trained in safeguarding. They are vigilant in spotting the signs that may indicate that pupils need help. Pupils' care and well-being are at the heart of everything that staff do.

Leaders have forged close links with agencies that provide effective help and support for pupils when needed. Leaders have invested in staff to help pupils with mental health issues, including those that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of alcohol and drug misuse. They learn how to keep themselves safe when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, some pupils have not developed sufficient fluency, accuracy and confidence in reading. This means that they struggle to access the full curriculum as well as their peers. Leaders should ensure that these pupils receive effective and regular support to enable them to catch up quickly and access their learning more easily across different subjects.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2016.

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

Unique reference number	137421
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10204440
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,296
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Whitehead
Headteacher	Richard Jones
Website	www.st-christophers.org
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England school. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in December 2016.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and the chair of the governing body.

- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the Diocese of Blackburn, a representative of the local authority and a school improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed leaders' record of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding and considered the views of parents and carers.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in science, languages, history, and art and design. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, met with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and had discussions with teachers and small groups of pupils.

Inspection team

Erica Sharman, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Caldecott	Ofsted Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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