Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St John's Catholic Primary School

Berry Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 7HG

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

St John's Catholic Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is Patricia O'Donnell. This school is part of All Saints Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Stephen Wheatley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Leahy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They thrive in the school's close-knit community and build strong relationships with their peers and staff. Pupils understand and live up to the school's well-embedded values. In lessons, they support their classmates and celebrate their success. Pupils are polite and greet people warmly. They dine well together at lunch, showing manners while having pleasant conversations. On the playground, pupils look after each other and have fun.

Pupils learn the importance of serving the community. They take on responsibilities, such as working as house captains, members of the chaplaincy team and the school council. Older pupils also help children in Reception as 'buddies', modelling positive play and making sure that the children quickly feel part of the school community.

Pupils typically work hard to reach the school's high expectations. In early years, children are inquisitive and understand that learning is important. Pupils are keen to succeed in education. They have high aspirations for themselves and their peers. Pupils are willing to take calculated risks, and they appreciate when teachers challenge them with something difficult. Overall, they achieve the curriculum goals. By the end of Year 6, pupils are ready for their next steps in education.

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

The school has a well-designed and typically well-taught curriculum. Curriculum plans are well organised and outline exactly what pupils must learn. Using this guidance, teachers usually arrange effective learning activities for pupils. Teachers provide pupils with lots of opportunities to review what has been taught. This helps pupils remember key knowledge over time. Teachers routinely check what pupils know. When pupils have misunderstood or forgotten areas of the curriculum, staff provide effective support so that pupils do not fall behind. Occasionally, however, teachers choose learning activities that do not enable pupils to learn the intended knowledge as well as they could. When this happens, pupils do not remember key content over time.

The school swiftly identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). With the support of external specialists, the school develops precise guidance and training to enable teachers to provide what these pupils need. Teachers skilfully adapt their teaching so that pupils with SEND learn what is expected. Well-trained additional adults lead small groups that help these pupils learn specific areas of the curriculum that they find difficult to learn. As a result, pupils with SEND learn the curriculum well.

The school has a well-established approach to teaching pupils how to read. Children in the early years confidently learn the basics of reading. Staff systematically teach new words that help pupils read increasingly challenging texts. In 2023, the school's performance in national screening for phonics was below the national average. Since then, the school has put in place effective measures so that by the end of key stage 1 most pupils learn what they need to read fluently. For those pupils who find reading difficult, the school provides effective support so that they do not fall behind. Pupils enjoy reading and recommend books to their friends. They value the school's book collection and the 'birthday books' awarded in assembly.

Teachers ensure pupils understand and live up to the school's expectations of their behaviour. Children in the early years quickly learn and follow the school's routines. They sustain concentration and listen politely when others are speaking. Because pupils are well behaved, they typically learn free from distractions.

The school has a well-developed programme for pupils to learn about life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about different beliefs and lifestyles and understand the importance of respecting others' differences. They also learn about key elements of democracy. For example, pupils take part in elections and class debates. Pupils speak with maturity about how to build and maintain healthy relationships. They are well prepared for life after primary school.

Leaders have successfully led the school through a challenging period, including when the school's building was deemed unsafe and demolished. The school is now settled in temporary accommodation with a new team of teachers. However, due to the large amount of change at the school, the impact of subject leadership is inconsistent. As a result, some subjects are less well developed.

Leaders have earned the confidence of parents and carers, who appreciate the school's caring ethos and how well staff meet the needs of pupils. Staff morale is high. They enjoy working at the school and feel well supported. They are grateful for the way leaders help them maintain a reasonable workload.

Governors and trustees have the skills and knowledge needed to ensure that the school provides the best possible education. They understand each other's roles and work well together. Using precise and accurate information, governors and trustees hold leaders to account for the quality of the school's provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, teachers deliver learning activities that do not help pupils to learn as well as they could. In these instances, pupils do not thoroughly understand or remember what they are trying to learn. The school must provide the necessary training to ensure that teachers deliver the most effective learning activities for pupils.
- Subject leadership is not consistently effective. In the subject areas where subjects are less well developed, pupils do not learn and remember key content in some subjects. The school should provide training for subject leaders to ensure all subjects continue to improve.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 predecessor school, St John's Catholic Primary School, to be good for overall effectiveness in March 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.

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	146859
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10269245
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	118
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tony Leahy
CEO of the trust	Stephen Wheatley
Headteacher	Patricia O'Donnell
Website	www.stjohns705.herts.sch.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- In the spring of 2022, the school's building was condemned. For a period of months, staff and pupils walked to and from a number of spaces in the community throughout the school day. By the end of the school year in 2022, the school was moved to a temporary building, where it is still located. Plans are under way for the building of a new school on the existing site.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2022. She is also the executive headteacher over this school and another school in the trust.
- The school joined the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust in May 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a Roman Catholic ethos. The school's most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2024. The report is on the school's website. The next section 48 inspection will usually be within five years.
- St John's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school in May 2019. When its predecessor school, St John's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good for overall effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with the CEO, trust leaders, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, governors and trustees, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered a range of documents and other information about the behaviour and attitudes and the personal development of pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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