

Inspection of St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

Croxley View, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 6BW

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2021

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	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School is a vibrant, happy place where pupils thrive and enjoy learning. Pupils come to school ready to learn and achieve. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour. Pupils are polite and respectful. They behave well in and out of lessons. Pupils contribute positively to class discussions and listen to others attentively. Older pupils can talk knowledgeably about what they have learned throughout their time at school.

The school's ethos ensures pupils grow into responsible and respectful young learners. Pupils have a secure understanding about what it is to be a good citizen. They demonstrate a love of learning. Pupils' work is displayed around the school showing their learning across a range of subjects. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about what they know about topics in history and science and what skills they have learned in physical education.

Pupils have high ambitions for their futures. Pupils shared aspirations to be astronauts, news reporters, national health workers and scientists. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe. They say bullying is rare and they are confident that adults in school will sort out any concerns. Parents are extremely happy with what the school offers their children. Staff morale is high and all staff that responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, and those spoken to, are proud to work at the school.

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

Leaders, including governors, articulate a strong vision to do the very best for all pupils. This is shared by all staff. Leaders and governors know the school context very well. They understand what pupils need. They have reviewed all curriculum subject plans, although some are more developed than others.

The teaching of reading is well planned. A high proportion of children enter nursery speaking English as an additional language. English leaders prioritise reading, communication and language. In Nursery, children are introduced to picture books and stories read by adults. In Reception, children start to identify letter sounds in a systematic way. Activities are planned to help children practise the sounds they are learning daily. As a result, children quickly begin to read with increasing fluency. Carefully chosen books and engaging activities ensure that Nursery children develop a love of books. This continues as pupils move further up the school. Pupils who join the school later than most or who speak English as an additional language are given precise support to catch up quickly.

In most subjects, plans are well structured and build on pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers check pupils' understanding and identify gaps so that these can be addressed in the lessons. Pupils make links across subjects and talk in depth about their learning. Leaders have identified that they need to develop pupils' vocabulary across curriculum subjects. However, this has not yet been specifically planned into leaders' curriculum. As a result, leaders do not know well enough if pupils are

accessing a full range of vocabulary that would enable them to build a complex understanding of all curriculum content.

Staff identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. Leaders liaise closely with external agencies so that they get the right support. Pupils with an education, health and care plan get precise support to address targets. Reviews of the needs of pupils with SEND are timely. Pupils with SEND are given precise, small group support from teaching staff when it is needed. This support is continually reviewed by the class teacher. This ensures that pupils with SEND can access and make progress in the curriculum.

Early years staff are skilled at identifying children's social and emotional needs when children start and plan support appropriately. This helps children to settle quickly in readiness for learning. Children are given numerous well thought-through opportunities to develop early reading and early writing. Children are ready to move into Year 1 by the end of their time in the early years. However, when children chose activities themselves, adults do not use these opportunities to develop language skills as well as they do in the planned sessions.

Leaders' vision is to give pupils a wide range of rich experiences beyond where they live. Pupils experience a variety of trips and can talk about different faiths in detail. They are respectful and know that it is 'okay to be different'. Teachers use a combination of schemes to help support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). This is making it difficult for leaders to check whether all the important content that leaders want pupils to learn is being taught at the right time for each year group. Leaders are currently reviewing plans so that there is precise guidance for teachers to ensure that teaching promotes pupils' SMSC development fully.

Governors know the school's strengths and what leaders need to do to improve further. However, leaders' development plans do not allow governors to hold them precisely to account, most notably regarding the quality of education provided in the school. The headteacher and governors are working closely with the local authority on school improvement priority areas.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff make sure they know pupils well. Communication across the school is strong, staff are vigilant and know that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. The safeguarding lead is meticulous at following up concerns. Leaders work with a range of organisations to ensure pupils are supported and kept safe. Regular meetings with staff ensure that latest updates are communicated. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' intentions to improve and extend pupils' vocabulary has not yet been planned specifically into leaders' subject curriculum plans. This means that leaders do not know whether important vocabulary they want pupils to know is being taught when they want it to be. Leaders need to specify precisely within curriculum plans the vocabulary they want pupils to learn and state when this should be taught for each curriculum subject and year group.
- Leaders are using a variety of schemes to support pupils' personal development. As a result, leaders do not check precisely when and if all the important content is being taught. Leaders need to ensure plans are clear and teaching is structured so that they know that the important content is being taught at the right time for each age group.
- A high proportion of children enter the school with little or no English. However, some staff do not use all opportunities to support children to develop language skills, for example when interacting during child-initiated play. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans and staff's training support staff to understand strategies and ways in which they can use in-the-moment opportunities to continue to enhance children's early language skills.
- Governors' and leaders' improvement plans do not precisely say what the school needs to do to improve the quality of education. As a result, governors are not able to precisely measure the impact of leaders' work to improve this area. Leaders, including governors, should ensure that development priorities are precise and measurable and routinely reviewed.

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	117495
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10199314
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	447
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Callaghan
Headteacher	Elaine Harrold
Website	www.stanthonys.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 November 2006, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes since the previous inspection. The school has expanded to two forms in each year group and has undergone extensive building works. The new headteacher has been in post since April 2021. Prior to this role, she was a deputy headteacher at the school.

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 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and two assistant headteachers. The lead inspector held a meeting with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of information, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of pupils' behaviour and

curriculum plans. School policies, documents and records relating to safeguarding, including the single central record and governors' minutes, were scrutinised.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school sites. They also reviewed records of behaviour and attendance and other information provided by school leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 36 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 57 free-text responses to the parent questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 137 responses to the pupil questionnaire. They also spoke with several parents on the second day.
- The subjects covered in depth as part of this inspection were reading, writing, mathematics, design and technology, art, science and computing. In each subject, inspectors spoke with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

Inspection team

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