

Inspection of St Francis de Sales Catholic Junior School

Hale Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L4 3RL

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud to attend St Francis de Sales Junior School. Pupils thrive in a safe, nurturing environment. They achieve exceptionally well. Each day they do their best to live up to the school's motto, 'Shall not fail'. Staff and pupils treat each other with the utmost respect and kindness. The school's values are tangible in the classrooms and corridors where displays of pupils' work adorn walls and help to bring the curriculum to life.

Pupils' behaviour during lessons and play times is exemplary. They told inspectors that misbehaviour never disrupts their learning. Pupils also said that bullying hardly ever happens. On the rare occasions that bullying does occur, pupils said that staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils are confident that staff will support them in sorting out any concerns that they might have.

Leaders, including governors, are extremely ambitious for their pupils. They have very high expectations. They ensure that all pupils benefit from a broad and exciting curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular activities covering sports and the arts. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their move to secondary school.

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

Leaders have developed a broad, balanced and exciting curriculum. They have broken down the knowledge that pupils need to acquire in each subject into small steps. Teachers use this information with precision to plan work that is well ordered and challenges pupils of all abilities. Pupils develop their knowledge extremely well in all subjects.

Reading is at the heart of pupils' learning. Staff ensure that pupils who need additional support are identified quickly and receive suitable help. Staff are trained well to help pupils gain the phonics knowledge that they need to be successful readers. The well-planned reading curriculum ensures that pupils read with increasing fluency, expression and confidence as they move through school. Pupils who read to an inspector were able to select and share a library book that they themselves had contributed to.

Teachers are well trained. They have a comprehensive understanding of the subjects that they teach. They use a variety of strategies to engage pupils and challenge their thinking in lessons. Teachers regularly assess the progress that pupils are making. They ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early. Where necessary, they skilfully adapt resources so that these pupils can learn the same curriculum as their classmates. All pupils, including those with SEND, make excellent progress through all curriculum areas. They achieve extremely well.

The curriculum extends beyond academic subjects and provides many opportunities for pupils to both discover and develop their talents. For example, all pupils learn to play a musical instrument. Many choose to learn a second. Pupils in each year group can take part in a residential visit. Older pupils have the chance to participate in trips abroad, including a ski holiday. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were several after-school clubs. These activities are gradually being reintroduced, along with the school choir and orchestra.

Pupils are tolerant and supportive of each other. They take great pride in their work. They are eager to answer questions during lessons and enjoy sharing their opinions. Pupils are resilient and have extremely positive attitudes to learning. They told inspectors how they use 'the power of not yet' to develop positive mindsets. Rather than saying, 'I can't do that', they say, 'I can't do that yet'.

Pupils have a good understanding of issues such as equality and diversity. They study major world religions and have an excellent understanding of British values. The curriculum is enriched with visits to places of cultural interest. Older pupils are keen to take on responsibilities such as leading worship and acting as reading ambassadors. Pupils regularly support charities, including the local food bank.

Leaders do all they can to raise pupils' aspirations about what they can achieve in life. For example, they recently hosted a careers week to broaden pupils' knowledge of the world of work. They used this event to challenge gender stereotypes by showing, for example, that jobs in engineering are available to both men and women.

Many of the written responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are extremely positive. Several parents and carers used the word 'amazing' to describe the school.

Staff who met with inspectors were highly complimentary about the support that they receive from school leaders. Staff also said that leaders are mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Staff understand the need to be vigilant. They know their school well and the area it serves. They regularly teach pupils about how to keep themselves safe, both online and when out in the community. For example, Year 6 pupils have recently worked on a project about gangs and 'county lines' drug trafficking.

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	104650
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10199433
Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	421
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Isabelle Faulkner
Headteacher	Andrew Reidel
Website	www.st-francis-de-sales.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2007, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school has a Catholic denomination. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2019.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2016.
- The two assistant headteachers were appointed in September 2015 and September 2016.

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 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team, including the leader for SEND.

- Inspectors held meetings with teachers and subject leaders.
- Inspectors met with two governors including the vice chair of governors.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience of school. They also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break times.
- One of the inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader to discuss how pupils are kept safe. He also examined safeguarding records.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science and history. As part of this process, they met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked closely at the school's plans for several other subjects.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and spoke with groups of pupils about behaviour and other aspects of school life.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

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