

Inspection of a good school: St Francis of Assisi Catholic College

Erdington Road, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands WS9 0RN

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 January 2022

Outcome

St Francis of Assisi Catholic College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending this school make good progress. Teachers make sure that learning is well planned. They have thought carefully about what to teach and when. They provide high-quality resources that help pupils to organise what they need to learn. Teachers check that pupils have understood what they have been taught before moving on to new content.

Leaders and other staff have high expectations. They expect pupils to be polite and respectful. Pupils rise to the challenge. They are courteous and kind. Pupils are keen to do well, and they work hard in class. Disruption to learning is rare.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know that staff care about them. Pupils know who they can talk to if they have a problem. They trust staff to deal with issues, such as bullying, on the rare occasions when it happens. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Most attend regularly. They appreciate the improvements that the headteacher and other leaders have brought about over the last 18 months.

Students in the sixth form enjoy a wide selection of subject choices and a growing range of enrichment opportunities. High-quality careers guidance helps them, and younger pupils, to plan their next stage of education.

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

The headteacher provides clear and principled leadership. He is well supported by an effective team of senior leaders and governors. Together, they have stabilised the school following a period of turbulence. They have brought about improvements to many areas of school life, including behaviour and the curriculum.

The school's leadership commands the confidence of staff, parents and pupils. Staff appreciate leaders' work to ensure that teachers' workload is manageable. Many parents

told inspectors how happy they were with the school. The sixth form has grown considerably in recent years, as more pupils choose to stay in the school beyond Year 11.

Subject leaders and staff have produced a well-organised and ambitious curriculum in all subjects. They have carefully planned what pupils should learn and they regularly review how well the curriculum is working.

The curriculum is taught well across subjects and from Year 7 to Year 13. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this well to explain new concepts, choosing appropriate methods to help pupils learn. Teachers systematically check pupils' understanding. They provide extra help when it is needed to address misconceptions. They regularly make pupils recall what they have been taught previously. As a result, pupils remember what they have been taught and can apply their learning to new contexts.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well in school. Leaders provide teachers with helpful guidance about how to meet pupils' individual needs. Teachers adapt the curriculum in the light of this guidance. Staff provide effective extra support when pupils need it.

All pupils with SEND have a learning support plan. This details pupils' needs and strategies that teachers should use to support them. Pupils with SEND who do not have an education, health and care (EHC) plan are not routinely involved in producing or reviewing their plan. Neither are their parents. Consequently, these plans do not reflect pupils' views and preferences. Many parents are unaware of the strategies being used to support their children.

Leaders have put in place an effective programme to support pupils who find reading difficult. Extra support is well matched to each pupil's ability to read. Pupils become more confident readers and more confident learners as a result.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, consistently demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. Leaders place great emphasis on politeness. This has been highly effective. Pupils throughout the school are polite, sensible, mature and articulate. The school is calm during lesson times and at social times.

Most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. A minority do not. Disadvantaged pupils are disproportionately represented in this minority. Leaders are taking appropriate steps to address this key priority.

The school's work to promote pupils' wider development is effective. The curriculum contains a comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and economic education. The school's previously rich programme of enrichment activities has suffered because of COVID-19. It is being reintroduced now as restrictions allow. Careers education is strong in the school.

Governors have appropriate expertise. They are committed to the school, and they ensure that it has a clear vision that 'only the best is good enough'. However, they have been less

successful in communicating the school's key priorities for improvement. This means that they are less effective than they could be in holding leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong culture of care and keeping pupils safe. Pupils, parents and staff say that pupils feel safe in school. Inspectors agree.

Staff know how to spot the signs that pupils might need extra help. They readily pass on their concerns to leaders, who deal with these in a timely manner. The school provides high-quality pastoral support that pupils value. Much of the support for pupils is provided by school staff. However, leaders understand when to involve outside agencies and they do so appropriately. They ensure that pupils get the help they need when they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governors have not communicated the school's strategy as effectively as they should. Their strategic plan has too many priorities. Consequently, key priorities, for example improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, are lost within them. This means that governors are not able to hold leaders to account for some aspects of the school as well as they could. Governors should ensure that the school's strategic priorities are clear and that they hold leaders to account for addressing these.
- Pupils with SEND who do not have EHC plans are not consulted sufficiently in drawing up plans for their support. Their parents are also not consulted adequately. Consequently, the support provided to pupils is not informed well enough by the views of pupils and their parents. Leaders should ensure that pupils with SEND and their parents are fully involved in developing and reviewing the support the school provides.

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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

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	104255
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10212437
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
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	1133
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Ward
Headteacher	Luke Salkeld
Website	www.stfrancis.cc
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic school. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2018.
- The headteacher took up his post in January 2021, having been acting headteacher since May 2020. Most members of the senior leadership team have taken up their posts since the last inspection.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers of education. A very small number of pupils attend each of these.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

- The school has specially resourced provision for 11 pupils with dyslexia. This is funded by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector spoke with a representative from the archdiocese of Birmingham.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: science, design technology, art and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting with designated safeguarding lead and another member of the safeguarding team, scrutinising policies and records relating to child protection and examining the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors considered provision for pupils with SEND as part of deep dives, by meeting with the special educational needs coordinator and speaking with a group of pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors considered responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times.
- Inspectors considered responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online inspection questionnaire, including written responses.
- Inspectors considered emails from a small number of parents and held telephone conversations with other parents.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gwen Onyon

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Ofsted Inspector

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