

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's, Mill Hill Lane, Derby, Derbyshire DE23 6SB

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 October 2022

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Joseph's are proud ambassadors of their school's values. They work hard and are kind to each other. The school is a happy, safe place where staff and pupils treat each other with respect. Pupils told the inspector that the school is 'like a whole entire family under one roof'.

All staff have high expectations for all pupils. Pupils are supported well to meet these expectations. They are keen to do their best. They love to earn team points and strive to achieve a 'hand in hand' certificate in assemblies. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are focused and calm in class. They get on very well during breaktimes. Older pupils are proud to be prefects, looking after the younger pupils on the playground. Pupils say that bullying is exceptionally rare. They know that adults will take appropriate action if bullying occurs.

Pupils embrace the wide range of opportunities the school offers. For example, they enjoy taking part in Irish dancing, Gaelic football and residential trips. All pupils learn how to ride a bike and are rightly proud of their achievements. Pupils value the responsibilities they hold in school, such as reading ambassadors, house captains and chaplains.

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

Leaders have developed a well-structured curriculum. It reflects the diverse population of the school community. They have sequenced the knowledge that pupils need to learn from the early years to the end of Year 6. Pupils learn how their faith influences their thoughts, decisions and actions. The curriculum covers a broad range of subjects. Teachers consider the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They adapt what they are teaching, and how, to ensure that these pupils learn as well as their peers. Effective teaching helps pupils to remember and understand what they are learning. Pupils have regular opportunities to recall their prior learning. For example, the daily 'maths blasts' help pupils to remember important number facts. Pupils use their

'toolkits' to remind themselves of key knowledge they need for the lesson. Most pupils achieve well.

Reading is fundamental to the school's curriculum. Each topic is enriched with books from a variety of interesting authors and genres. Pupils love talking to visiting authors. They are inspired to become readers and writers. Children in the early years and older pupils enjoy reading and listening to stories and poems. They understand why reading is important. One pupil told the inspector: 'Reading takes you to new places. It helps to develop a person's imagination.' The school has recently changed its approach to teaching pupils to read. The phonics programme starts early in Reception, where children explore books and learn new letters and sounds. Leaders identify pupils who may need extra support and help them to catch up. Occasionally, some books that help pupils to read are not closely matched to pupils' reading knowledge. Staff have received appropriate training to teach the new phonics programme. Leaders recognise that there is work to do to ensure that staff deliver the programme consistently well.

Children in the Reception class learn the routines and behaviours that enable them to be successful in school. Staff are skilful in their use of questions to develop children's thinking. Children learn how to hold a pencil and form their letters and numbers correctly. Children develop their language and communicate well with adults and their peers. Staff have high expectations of what children can achieve in the early years. Children are happy and curious learners.

Leaders provide a comprehensive personal development curriculum. Pupils learn how to become positive, respectful citizens. For example, the school council meetings provide opportunities for pupils to develop leadership and decision-making skills. Older pupils have recently graduated with 'diplomas' following their work with a local historian. Pupils reflect on their faith. They explore the school values in assemblies and school liturgies. Trips to local museums and the Derbyshire mills enhance pupils' learning. They are proud of the city they live in. Pupils talk with respect when discussing differences and diversity. While leaders promote the British values, pupils' knowledge of this is fragile.

Governors have a good understanding of the school. They are highly involved in school life. They are effective in checking the school's work and holding leaders to account. Leaders, including governors and the trust, are committed to meeting the needs of pupils and families in the community. Staff appreciate the attention leaders give to their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained in safeguarding. They recognise, report and record details that may contribute to a bigger picture of concern about a pupil's welfare. Leaders make appropriate decisions when necessary to escalate concerns. They work effectively with other agencies. They ensure that vulnerable pupils and families access the support they need.

Governors carry out regular checks. They assure themselves that safeguarding procedures are robust and carried out well. This includes staff recruitment and pre-employment checks.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's chosen phonics programme is relatively new to staff and pupils. A small number of staff are still learning its processes and how to implement the phonics scheme consistently well. A small minority of pupils are not getting consistent support with their phonics knowledge. Occasionally, the books are not well matched to the sounds the pupils know. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the right knowledge and training so that the scheme is always well used, and all books match the pupils' phonics knowledge so that they read as fluently as they could.
- Some pupils do not have a developed understanding of British values and a wide range of faiths and cultures. This limits their understanding of life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that pupils develop a deeper understanding of these aspects of the curriculum.

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 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 St Joseph's Catholic Primary School to be good in May 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' 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	146104
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10254872
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	373
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
Headteacher	Tracey Churchill
Website	www.stjosephsderby.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2018. When its predecessor school, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Nottingham. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school took place in October 2015. The school's next section 48 inspection is due to take place within this academic year.
- There have been significant changes in the membership of the governing body since the previous inspection. The chair and vice-chair of governors are newly appointed.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a range of staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, the chief executive and chair of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, spoke with teachers and spoke with pupils about their learning. She visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the inspector reviewed school policies, procedures and records. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and also spoke with staff, governors and pupils about the school's approach to keeping pupils safe.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including free-text comments. The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Kirsty Norbury, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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