

# Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead

Woodchurch Road, Oxton, Prenton, Merseyside CH43 5UT

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Inspection dates: 1 and 2 November 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils, and children in early years, love coming to school. They are happy and safe. Pupils enjoy learning and finding out new things with their friends. They know that they can talk to any member of staff if they are sad or worried. On the very rare occasions on which bullying occurs, it is reported and leaders deal with it effectively.

Pupils are very welcoming to visitors. They are respectful to adults and each other. Pupils learn about various faiths, cultures and traditions. They told inspectors that people should not be treated differently because of what they look like or where they are from.

Pupils are active citizens who care about their community. Members of the school choir regularly sing in the church and at celebration events. Pupils raise funds for many charities, including a local food bank and a hospital. They enjoy visits to museums, theatres, Chester and a nearby beach.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations that staff have of their behaviour and achievement. This helps to ensure that the school is calm and purposeful, and that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well in different areas of the curriculum. Children in early years also learn well.

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

Leaders and governors have crafted a carefully ordered curriculum, which engages pupils and children in early years. Visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities, help teachers and teaching assistants to enliven the curriculum. They also help pupils to meet leaders' high expectations, which include 'stepping up and achieving excellence'.

Leaders have carefully considered the order in which key knowledge should be taught. In most subjects, teachers know precisely what to teach and when. Leaders are refining the content of the curriculum in a small number of subjects where pupils are not learning as well as they should. Curriculum leaders are developing their subject knowledge. The support that they give to teachers is not as effective as it could be and this hinders how well some pupils build up new knowledge.

Teachers regularly check how well pupils are learning. In most subjects, they have a precise understanding of what knowledge pupils have learned securely or have forgotten. This helps teachers to develop an ambitious programme of learning for all pupils.

Leaders raise the profile of reading well. Pupils regularly compete in reading competitions and enjoy meeting writers, including poets. Skilled staff implement the phonics programme well. Pupils who find reading difficult are supported effectively during one-to-one reading sessions. Pupils who read for the lead inspector did so

confidently. Leaders extend pupils' knowledge of different authors by carefully selecting the books that teachers and pupils read in class. Due to leaders' effective approach to teaching reading, pupils, and children in early years, are becoming fluent readers.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND quickly. Leaders also ensure that teachers understand how to adapt the curriculum to enable SEND pupils to learn well. Additional help is carefully planned so that pupils do not miss any aspect of learning. Leaders work with specialist partners, and parents and carers, to make sure that pupils get the help that they need promptly. Pupils with anxiety, and other concerns, are supported by caring staff in the school's rainbow room.

Leaders provide a wide range of enrichment activities for pupils. Pupils enjoy attending football, basketball, Zumba, tennis and gardening clubs. They like to play the violin and ukulele. Leaders encourage pupils to pursue their interests in sports, such as cross-country running. Older pupils develop their leadership skills in different ambassadorial roles. Pupils in key stage 2 learn how to administer first aid. For example, they know how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Pupils are well mannered and considerate of others. They behave well in class and listen carefully to teachers. Children in early years also behave well. They are attentive during story time and they enjoy learning. As a result, lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Staff morale is high. Staff told inspectors that they are not burdened with unnecessary work. They also said that leaders are mindful of their mental health and well-being. Governors, and leaders from the Holy Family Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (HFCMAT), know which areas of the curriculum are the strongest. They have a precise understanding of what the school needs to do to further improve.

Typically, parents are positive about the school. They told inspectors that their children are safe and happy at school. Parents also said that they feel well informed about their children's academic progress.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders ensure that staff are familiar with the latest government guidance on keeping pupils safe in education. Leaders regularly update staff on developments regarding pupils' well-being and safety.

Staff know how to spot potential signs of neglect and/or abuse. They adhere to the school's policies and procedures for reporting concerns about pupils' safety. Leaders work with different external agencies if needed. They ensure that pupils get the help that they need promptly.

Pupils learn about dangers and risks. They learn how to use technology safely through different aspects of the curriculum.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The curriculum has not been finalised. In some subjects, leaders have not established exactly what pupils should learn and by when. This hinders how well some pupils acquire new knowledge and skills. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking to ensure that all staff know what to teach and when across all subjects.
- In a small number of subjects, subject leaders do not have the subject knowledge that they need to help teachers to improve how they deliver the curriculum. This means that the support that they give to teachers is not as effective as it should be. In addition, some pupils are not learning the curriculum as well as they should. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders receive the training and guidance that they need to support teachers to deliver the curriculum more effectively in these subjects.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146088
<b>Local authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241432
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	297
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Clare McNicolas
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alex Turner (head of school) Steve Jevons (executive head teacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stjosephscatholicprimarybirkenhead.co.uk">www.stjosephscatholicprimarybirkenhead.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- The school is part of the HFCMAT. St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead, converted to become an academy school in July 2018. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- The executive headteacher leads the primary schools in the HFCMAT.
- The school is a Roman Catholic Primary School. The last section 48 inspection was carried out on 15 March 2016.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Inspectors held meetings with the head of school, executive headteacher and the assistant headteacher. They also held meetings with other leaders, including those responsible for SEND, early years provision, pupils' attendance and behaviour, pupils' welfare and pupils' personal development.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chief executive officer and the chair of the governing body of the trust board.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in some other subjects. They spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors met with parents and reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments from parents. The lead inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey to consider.
- Inspectors spoke to safeguarding leaders about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents. They also talked with pupils about their safety and welfare. Inspectors examined a range of policies and documents. They also scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy.

## **Inspection team**

Lenford White, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Collette Mather	Ofsted Inspector
David Lobodzinski	Ofsted Inspector

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