

Inspection of St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

Oakwood Lane, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS9 6QY

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2022

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 13 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?

Pupils who attend St Nicholas Catholic Primary School understand the importance of the school's Christian vision to 'love one another, as I have loved you'. This vision is reflected strongly in their words and actions. Pupils understand, respect and celebrate their similarities and differences. They listen attentively to staff and other pupils in lessons. They are proud of their school and their achievements. Parents have many opportunities to get involved in the school community. Lesson visits, 'stay and play' sessions and celebration assemblies allow parents to be part of their child's journey through school.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and know that if they tell an adult about a problem, it will quickly be sorted out. Pupils rarely see or hear bullying or unkind language. School virtues, such as hope and patience, are a focus for staff and pupils. Reflecting on these virtues helps pupils to overcome challenges they may face.

Staff support leaders' ambition that pupils achieve their very best. They encourage pupils to be resilient and hard-working. Pupils support one another inside and outside of lessons. For example, 'sports leaders' arrange activities at lunchtime and older pupils act as 'buddies' to children in Reception. Pupils know the importance of staying healthy. Leaders place an equal value on supporting pupils' physical and mental health.

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

Leaders have planned a curriculum that prepares pupils well for their future. The important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn are clearly set out. Teachers take into consideration what Reception children already know when they start school. This means they skilfully adapt the curriculum each year to meet the needs of the children. Curriculum plans provide opportunities for pupils to revisit what they have previously learned. Staff use assessment well to find out what pupils do and do not remember. They provide pupils with additional support, inside and outside of lessons, to fill these gaps.

Pupils start learning phonics as soon as they join Reception. Leaders understand that becoming a fluent reader is an essential first step in every pupil's education. Staff know the sounds that pupils should be able to read at each stage of the phonics programme. However, some staff are new to the teaching of phonics. They do not always identify pupils' misconceptions quickly. Leaders provide ongoing training to ensure phonics is taught consistently across the school.

Reading is important to all pupils. They read regularly in lessons, at home with an adult and for pleasure at lunchtime. Some pupils and parents attend a 'Reading Café' at the start of the school day. Here, pupils share their favourite books with an adult. This further develops pupils' love of reading. Student librarians undertake their role with enthusiasm. They help others to choose books and visit local

bookshops with staff to purchase new books for the school library. Leaders carefully select books for pupils to study in lessons that deepen their understanding of the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive additional support in lessons. Staff are aware of their needs and create targets in pupils' individual learning plans. However, these targets sometimes lack detail about the specific support each pupil needs. The activities pupils complete do not always allow them sufficient practice to learn important skills and knowledge. This means that some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they might.

Children in the early years learn and play well with one another. They have access to engaging indoor and outdoor spaces. Carefully planned activities help to develop their language, communication and social skills. Staff support children by asking increasingly challenging questions. There are strong routines that prepare children well for Year 1. Leaders carefully plan what each child should know and be able to do by the end of Reception. However, some staff require further training to understand the purpose of each activity they are supporting.

Pupils take part in a range of residential and educational visits. These events enrich their education. The student council, 'eco warriors' and 'mini-vinnies' all contribute strongly to school life. Pupils in these groups take pride in their roles. Pupils raise money for charity, collect items for food banks and make suggestions for new clubs and activities. The curriculum for personal, social and health education covers a range of important themes, including mental health, staying safe online and healthy relationships. Pupils discuss some of these topics with confidence. However, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values, protected characteristics and other faiths and cultures is limited. These topics are not taught or revisited often enough for pupils to learn about them in depth.

Staff are proud to work at the school and feel well supported by leaders. Professional development opportunities contribute strongly to effective teaching at the school. Governors have a range of relevant skills and knowledge, which they use to support and challenge school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide regular training for staff so that they understand the potential risks to pupils' safety. Staff are confident to report their concerns, however small, to leaders. Leaders work with parents and external agencies to keep pupils safe. They pursue any concerns they have with determination to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people and their families. Leaders' records show appropriate actions are taken when pupils are at risk of harm.

Pupils know how to stay safe in person and online. For example, they understand the risks of speaking to an unknown person on the internet or not keeping a password secure.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The targets on individual learning plans for pupils with SEND vary in quality. Some pupils do not have targets that specifically match their current needs and support their next steps. Leaders should check that the targets on the support plans are matched closely to the needs of pupils and are being implemented consistently.
- The personal development curriculum does not place adequate focus on important aspects of life in modern Britain. This means that pupils' understanding of British values, protected characteristics and other faiths and cultures is too variable. Leaders should ensure that pupils revisit important content in the personal development curriculum so that it becomes embedded over time.

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	108029
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10242445
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stratis Koutsoukos
Headteacher	Jane Burns
Website	www.stnicholasprimaryleeds.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2009

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and several members of the senior leadership have changed.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place on 20 and 21 June 2019.

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 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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors spoke to teaching and non-teaching staff, in addition to representatives of the governing body.

- To evaluate the quality of education, deep dives were carried out in early reading, mathematics, history and physical education. Inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at books and spoke to both pupils and staff.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator. One inspector reviewed individual plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection. They spoke to pupils about their experience of attending the school. Inspectors also met with leaders to discuss the personal development curriculum.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including checks made on all adults who come onto the school site. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to ensure their understanding of safeguarding procedures. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to check on their work to keep pupils safe in school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alison Stephenson	His Majesty's Inspector
Suzette Garland-Grimes	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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