

Inspection of a good school: Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Wellington Street, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN32 7JX

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They know that adults care about them and make sure that they are safe.

Pupils are polite to others and move around school calmly. In class, pupils usually behave well. However, when activities do not match pupils' needs appropriately, they can become less focused on their work. Staff and pupils report that there has been a reduction in behaviour incidents in school since the start of the academic year. School records support this view.

Pupils trust adults to deal with bullying if it occurs. Rare incidents are dealt with swiftly. Staff support pupils to resolve issues when they fall out with their friends.

Until recently, the school did not offer a suitably broad curriculum to all pupils. Some subjects did not provide pupils with the breadth and ambition of the national curriculum. This situation improved at the beginning of the academic year. Despite these green shoots of improvement, there is much still to do.

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

In recent years, the school has experienced considerable turbulence in staffing. There have been three headteachers in as many years, as well as several changes in teaching staff. This, combined with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, has frustrated leaders' efforts to design and implement an effective curriculum.

The newly appointed headteacher, supported by the multi-academy trust, has worked quickly to establish a new senior leadership team. Collectively, the team has redesigned

the curriculum and many other aspects of the school, such as the way in which the school supports pupils' wider development. Although still at an early stage, the impact of leaders' work is beginning to be seen.

Leaders rightly prioritise the development of reading, writing and mathematics. A consistent approach to the teaching of phonics has been implemented in school. All staff have been trained and receive regular updates to support their work. Pupils engage well in phonics lessons and enjoy participating in activities. However, teachers do not address this swiftly. Some pupils are not given books to read that accurately match their phonic ability. This prevents them from reading with fluency and accuracy. Although pupils are provided with regular opportunities to practise the formation of letters, many do not write them accurately.

Leaders have established a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics across the school. They have ensured the progression of knowledge and skills over time. The mathematics curriculum has been enhanced with additional resources to ensure that pupils regularly revise and practise arithmetic skills and multiplication facts.

Leaders have ensured that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), now study a broad curriculum. Pupils with SEND are supported effectively in class. Adaptations are made to the curriculum to enable pupils with SEND to access it successfully. A small minority of pupils need support to manage their emotions. Staff know the pupils well and de-escalate situations effectively so that learning is not disrupted.

In subjects such as geography, leaders have carefully mapped out what pupils will learn as they progress through the school. Teachers usually consider the key concepts that pupils need to grasp to complete their work. For example, in one lesson, the teacher ensured that pupils understood the terms 'same', 'similar' and 'different' to describe and compare different environments around the world. Leaders recognise that some subjects are at an earlier stage of development, but they are resolute in their ambition to provide a high-quality education for all pupils.

Children in the early years enjoy learning in the classroom and outside. Leaders have ensured that the classroom is an attractive space for children to learn. The activities planned for children do not meet the needs of all children well. Some children lose interest quickly and do not benefit from the activities available. The trust is providing support to develop this aspect of the school's work.

Pupils learn about faiths and beliefs that are different to their own. They know that it is important to respect the beliefs of other people. Some pupils contribute to wider school activities by planning and delivering times of reflection, assemblies and celebrations, either in school or at the parish church. Some pupils, including those with SEND or those eligible for pupil premium funding, attend the extra-curricular clubs on offer. Leaders' plans to improve the school include providing a wider range of extra-curricular clubs and developing leadership responsibilities for pupils.

School and trust leaders have accurately identified the key areas of development for their work moving forward. They have not precisely identified the steps required to achieve their intended aims. Those responsible for school improvement do not know what is expected of them. Senior leaders do not know who to hold to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know that they can go to an adult if they feel unsafe. Safeguarding display boards in every classroom provide age-appropriate information to pupils. Pupils refer to this information, such as the minimum age for using different social media apps.

The recently introduced weekly 'one-minute updates' provide key safeguarding information and topical briefings to staff. Staff know the signs and symptoms of abuse and what to look for. They know what to do if they are concerned about a child and who to speak to. Some refinements are required to school policies to ensure that they are consistent in the information that they provide.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not read books that are closely matched to their phonic ability. This prevents them from reading with fluency and accuracy. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils read books that are matched to their phonic stage.
- Although school and trust leaders have identified the key priority areas for development, they have not considered the steps required to achieve the intended actions. Plans to deliver improvements lack the precision required to swiftly implement the changes necessary. Leaders should ensure that all of those responsible for improving the school know what is expected of them.

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 the school to be good on 7 and 8 November 2017.

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	139009
Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10255816
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nigel Stevenson
Headteacher	Mr Joseph O'Connor
Website	www.saintmarysprimarygrimsby.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in November 2017.
- The school joined the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Academy Trust on 1 August 2022. Prior to this, the school was part of the Northern Lincolnshire Catholic Academy Trust.
- There have been a number of staff changes in recent years, including the headteacher, who joined the school in September 2022. The deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2023, having previously worked at the school as assistant headteacher since March 2020. The early years leader took over the post in September 2022.
- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is well above average.
- Most pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The school has a Nursery class. Children access this on a part-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader and special educational needs coordinator.
- Meetings were held with leaders from the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Academy Trust, including the chief executive officer, as well as members of the local governing board.
- The quality of education was evaluated through conducting deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. During each of these deep dives, the inspector met with leaders responsible for the subject, conducted lesson visits and looked at pupils' work. The inspector also met with staff and pupils separately to gather their views.
- The inspector spoke to parents on the playground at the end of the day.
- Responses submitted on Ofsted's survey, Parent View, as well as staff and pupil surveys were considered.
- The inspector looked at the school's safeguarding records, including the single central record of recruitment checks. Arrangements for safeguarding were discussed with leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Matthew Harrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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