

Inspection of a good school: Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School

New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 0RG

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 January 2023

Outcome

Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' enthusiasm for their learning is palpable. They work hard and enjoy their lessons. They learn to read and write very well. They grin and talk excitedly when showing visitors their work. They are rightly proud of their paintings, drawings and double-page spreads for their end-of-topic work.

Pupils value the opportunities to learn beyond their classroom. Trips, visits, assemblies and visiting speakers all help pupils enhance their understanding of their class work. Most pupils take part in the large array of extra-curricular clubs. Pupils especially like the activities and 'toasties' in the Ark before- and after-school club.

Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. They say that it is easy to make friends. When there are fallings out between classmates, staff deal with any issues quickly and well. Pupils feel safe and confident in their community. Their behaviour is often exemplary. Older pupils role model and support younger pupils as buddies. This helps new pupils, including the youngest children in Reception, to settle very quickly. As one very young pupil told the inspector, 'Everyone is welcome here.'

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

Since her arrival in 2019, the headteacher has focused systematically on the development of a curriculum that provides pupils with meaningful learning across the range of subjects. Although this planning slowed during the partial closures due to the pandemic, leaders' commitment has remained unwavering. As a result, pupils access a broad curriculum offer which is well planned. Curriculum leaders take responsibility for each subject. The headteacher has ensured that these leaders have sufficient time to monitor the quality of provision in their subjects. However, this monitoring is very new in some subjects.

Staff are very well trained in the school's chosen phonics programme. Leaders have invested in appropriate resources to deliver phonics effectively. Leaders and teachers,

including in the early years, help parents to support their children at home with early reading. Staff are adept at identifying and supporting pupils who are struggling. Pupils learn to read quickly and fluently. Many come to love reading. Pupils of all ages talk excitedly about their books. Their strong foundation in reading is also reflected in their writing, spelling and high-quality work.

While staff are very confident in the delivery of the reading, writing and mathematics curriculum, there are some other areas where staff's subject knowledge is not as well developed. Here, staff follow planning closely, but do not identify whether the activities are the most effective to deliver the knowledge that they intend. While pupils enjoy and learn many facts, they are not developing a deep understanding of the precise knowledge that staff intend.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified carefully through the school's thorough screening processes. Support and intervention, most notably to support pupils' speech, language and communication needs, help those pupils when they need it. This support means that pupils access all lessons successfully alongside their classmates. Often these pupils thrive in their learning and development.

Staff and pupils uphold the school's values of 'ready, respectful and kind'. Pupils, as they get older, embrace the range of responsibilities on offer in roles such as house captains, prefects, buddies, deputy or head boy and girl and much more. Where pupils need help and guidance, on the rare occasion when they misbehave, leaders and staff are relentless in the help that they provide. As a result, pupils and children value each other and the harmonious, happy school community.

Almost all staff and parents are effusive in their praise for leaders. They feel incredibly well supported. Staff feel that workload is manageable because leaders make it so. Parents feel that leaders care for them as well as their children.

Governors, several of whom are new, bring a range of expertise. They care about the staff and pupils in their community. However, they do not know enough about the quality of provision in the school, especially related to curriculum development and pupils' behaviour. They do not undertake sufficient checks on this area of leaders' work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher, ably supported by her senior team, ensures that staff are well trained to identify any early signs of concern about pupils' safety and well-being. Staff record all concerns that they have. Leaders act quickly and effectively on any concerns raised. Records are well kept, including information about the actions taken by leaders.

Leaders are tenacious in their work with external agencies to try to get the right support at the right time for pupils when needed.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe. The youngest children can explain about

road safety., As pupils get older, they can speak with increasing competence about healthy relationships and online safety.

The checks made on staff employed to work with pupils are appropriate. There were some minor administrative gaps in the record of these checks. These were resolved while the inspector was on site.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff are not confident with the delivery of some subjects within the foundation curriculum. This means that they do not check well enough to ensure that pupils are learning the specific content and knowledge intended. Consequently, pupils do not develop the rich understanding that leaders expect. Leaders must ensure that staff are confident to deliver these subjects effectively and that assessment and monitoring ensure that pupils are learning the intended content as well as they should.
- Governance arrangements do not ensure that there are sufficient checks and balances on some of the work that leaders undertake. They do not know enough about some strategic aspects of the school's work, such as the curriculum. The trust needs to ensure that governors undertake appropriate steps to develop a good understanding of the impact of leaders' actions.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 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.

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	138105
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255211
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	218
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon Fenning
Headteacher	Lesley Roche
Website	www.ourladyimmaculateprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a change in headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school offers a before- and after-school club, The Ark. It is run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- School leaders do not currently use alternate provision for any children.
- The school received a section 48 inspection in 2018.

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 held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, senior leaders, governors, the chair of the trust and a representative from the Diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: early reading, history, art and design and technology.

- For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with senior leaders and subject leaders, conducted lesson visits, spoke to pupils, heard pupils read, and scrutinised pupils' work. In Reception, the inspector observed small-group, focused activities, observed child-initiated play and spoke to the early years leaders.
- The inspector also reviewed minutes of governor meetings, leaders' development plans, school policies and curriculum documentation.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed records. The inspector checked the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. She also spoke to governors, leaders and staff.
- To gather evidence about pupils' experiences, the inspector observed them at different times during the school day, including in the before- and after-school childcare.
- The inspector took account of the 70 responses, including free-text responses, to the survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- To gather the views of staff, the inspector took account of 25 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- There were no completed pupil surveys. To gather pupil views, the inspector spoke to a range of pupils in the school while on-site during the inspection.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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