

Inspection of a good school: Saint Albert the Great Catholic Primary School

Acorn Road, Bennetts End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP3 8DW

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 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. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They are interested in their lessons and proud of the responsibilities they hold. Older pupils are 'buddies' for younger pupils. They help their younger friends at playtimes and look after them on school trips, such as to the theatre.

Pupils generally respond well to leaders' high expectations for their behaviour, showing positive attitudes towards learning. However, younger pupils sometimes become distracted. They are, on occasions, allowed to call out in lessons. This interrupts learning.

Pupils value the friends they make in school. They build positive relationships with each other and with adults. They say that it is a kind school. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and what it looks and feels like. They are confident that adults in the school will help them if they are upset or worried. Pupils feel safe.

Pupils have a strong voice in school improvement. Staff respect pupils' views and work with pupils to make St Albert the Great an even better school. The work that pupil groups carry out is valued by other pupils. The activities that the elected pupil well-being group organises are very popular.

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

Leaders have developed an aspirational curriculum. Teachers receive training in the subjects that they teach. In some subjects, leaders have been very clear about what should be taught and when. This ensures that teachers are able to teach important knowledge at a helpful time. Teachers explain things carefully to pupils. They build up pupils' knowledge over time in planned sequences of lessons. They check on what pupils remember and repeat important information. Pupils recall their learning and use it confidently to help them progress through the curriculum. However, this is not the case in

other areas of the curriculum. In some subjects, leaders have not considered what should be taught, how it should be taught or how long should be spent teaching it. Teachers determine for themselves the detail of what pupils should learn and are unsure about what the most important parts of learning are. As a result, they do not focus what they teach as well as they should, and pupils struggle to learn and remember important subject knowledge.

The school is generally a calm and orderly place to learn. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and engage in their learning. They discuss their learning positively with their friends and work independently. However, some of the youngest pupils are allowed to be a little noisy and lively in lessons or in group work. When this happens, it interrupts teaching and slows learning down.

Staff teach early reading well. Children start to learn to read as soon as they begin school in early years. Teachers use the same consistent teaching approaches. Pupils read from books well matched to the sounds that they know. If pupils are falling behind, teachers provide support to help them catch up. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and are building their confidence and their enjoyment of books. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about the books and authors they prefer and why. They are keen readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are given appropriate support to help them join in with all lessons with their friends. However, the individual plans for pupils with SEND are not always detailed or precise enough. Pupils' individual targets are not clear about what exactly they need to learn or remember in order to progress in their learning. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not always receive the individualised support that they need in order to achieve their specific targets.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Leaders have developed a wide range of opportunities for pupils to make progress personally as well as academically. Leaders listen to, and value, what pupils say about the school. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to become involved in, and to lead, aspects of school improvement. Pupils enjoy a very wide range of clubs, including clubs that they have organised themselves to help their friends' well-being. Pupils learn about a range of religions and families. This supports pupils' wider social and cultural development. Pupils are accepting of everyone.

Governors work with leaders well. They receive information from a range of sources, including the local authority. This supports them to be clear about priorities for their school. Staff are proud to work at the school and feel well supported with their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff are well trained to spot risks that pupils may face. Staff know how to raise any worries they may have about pupils. Leaders provide support in school for pupils and families who need it. They work well with other agencies to provide additional help if required.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. The curriculum supports this. Pupils understand what healthy friendships look like and how to avoid risks when playing games online.

Leaders undertake appropriate checks on staff before they are employed in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not provided sufficient detail to teachers about what needs to be taught in some subjects. This means that teachers do not focus on teaching the important subject knowledge that pupils need to learn. This does not help pupils to build effectively over time on what they already know and can do. Leaders should ensure that teachers are given enough detail for all areas of the curriculum so that teachers know precisely what to teach and when.
- Leaders and staff do not always have high enough expectations of behaviour for the youngest pupils. On occasions, pupils' calling out or restlessness interrupts learning. Leaders must ensure that expectations of the youngest pupils' learning behaviours are consistently high.
- Individual targets for some pupils with SEND are not consistently clear or precise enough. Pupils do not receive the consistent support that they need in order to make progress. Leaders must ensure that individual targets lay out the exact support pupils need and ensure that it is consistently delivered.

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 May 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	117471
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10212484
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Spice
Headteacher	Kathryn Little (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.albertthegreat.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use alternative provision for pupils.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The executive headteacher is also the executive headteacher of another school.
- The most recent inspection of the school's denominational education and collective worship under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in November 2016. The next section 48 inspection must take place within eight years.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, the inspector considered the design of the curriculum, spoke with subject leaders, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and listened to children reading. The inspector also spoke with teachers and pupils.

- The inspector spoke with leaders of other subjects in the curriculum, leaders with responsibility for attendance, leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead, teachers and pupils. The inspector also reviewed records, policies and documents related to safeguarding.
- No pupils completed Ofsted's survey of pupils' views. To gather pupils' views, the inspector spoke with pupils, including representatives from the school's pupil groups.
- There were 25 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. These comments were taken into account alongside views expressed in discussions with staff.
- The inspector reviewed the 25 responses and 18 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers.

Inspection team

Debbie Rogan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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