

Inspection of a good school: Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First School

Downsell Road, Webheath, Redditch, Worcestershire B97 5RR

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2023

Outcome

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders provide a caring and welcoming community. Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities that are on offer. They feel happy and safe at school because staff look after them well.

Pupils benefit from leaders' aims to ensure that 'every child enjoys learning, experiences success, and develops their full potential'. From Reception to Year 4, pupils follow a curriculum that gives them solid foundations for middle school. Expectations of pupils' behaviour and their academic achievement are high. In most subjects, pupils make effective progress through the curriculum. There are a few subjects where there is more work to be done to maximise learning.

Pupils get on well with each other. They respect staff. They behave well in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes. Staff make sure that pupils know what bullying is and why it is wrong. Year 4 pupils take on roles such as anti-bullying ambassadors. Staff deal effectively with bullying when it happens.

Leaders and staff make sure that parents feel welcome at the school. From the induction of their children into Reception right up to Year 4, parents are encouraged to get involved in their children's education. Staff organise workshops for parents at the school to keep them informed about what pupils learn and how they learn.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that allows pupils to know more and remember more over time. Learning is organised so that knowledge builds securely from early learning in the Reception Year to the end of Year 4.

In Reception, children benefit from a carefully structured curriculum and a stimulating environment. Staff support children's personal, social and emotional development well. They plan engaging activities that allow children to start to understand the world around them. Children also get off to a good start in literacy and numeracy.

Throughout the school, teachers plan activities that are both challenging and engaging for pupils. They organise learning to help pupils remember what they have previously learned. For example, in mathematics, pupils start lessons by doing a 'flashback' activity based on previous learning. In computing, pupils develop their skills and knowledge by revisiting key topics every year in more depth.

Pupils enjoy the activities teachers plan for them. They collaborate well with each other and do not disrupt lessons.

Teachers usually check how well pupils learn during lessons. This approach allows them to adjust their teaching, if necessary, to make sure that all pupils learn well. In most subjects, teachers also have systems to check pupils' learning over time in order to identify any gaps in knowledge and understanding that may occur. However, subject leaders are still developing approaches to teaching and assessment in some foundation subjects. As a result, checks on what learning pupils have retained are not as precise in these subjects as in other areas of the curriculum.

Leaders and staff focus on helping pupils to become competent readers as quickly as possible. The teaching of phonics starts as soon as children join the Reception class. Staff teach phonics well. Therefore, almost all pupils become fluent readers by the end of Year 2. The few who have difficulties in learning to read get effective support to catch up. Leaders also successfully promote the enjoyment of reading. Pupils have access to a wealth of texts in the school library and in classrooms. There is real enthusiasm for reading in the school.

Through the curriculum and in assemblies, pupils learn what it means to be a responsible and law-abiding individual. Pupils also learn how to adopt healthy lifestyles, to understand positive relationships, and to respect other people's beliefs and ideas. There is a wide range of activities on offer at after-school clubs. Pupils take part in football, gymnastics, gardening, singing, art or dance. Older pupils take on leading roles as members of the school council, play leaders or reading buddies.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. A precise record is kept of pupils' requirements. Staff make effective use of this information to support the learning of pupils with SEND. They make sure that pupils with SEND can access the same curriculum as their peers and enjoy all aspects of school life.

Leaders support the professional development of staff and are mindful of their workload. Staff value the positive atmosphere and sense of belonging to a cohesive team. Many say that they enjoy working at the school.

The multi-academy company provides strong support to the school. Its school improvement team contributes effectively to the development of the quality of education.

Governors are knowledgeable and committed. They provide effective challenge and support to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training. All members of staff are clear about their duty of care. They know how to identify issues and report any worries promptly. Leaders quickly follow up concerns. They support families and work well with external agencies when pupils may be at risk.

Leaders, with the support of multi-academy directors, have strong systems in place to manage safe recruitment and concerns about staff.

Staff make pupils aware of risks and how to adopt safe behaviours. They teach them about how to stay safe online and when using social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, approaches to teaching and assessment are still being developed. As a result, gaps in pupils' learning that may develop over time are not always identified and addressed. Therefore, pupils do not learn as well as they could in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that assessment opportunities that support strong learning are embedded across the curriculum.

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 predecessor school, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First School, to be good in September 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	141058
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10240147
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	288
Appropriate authority	Board of directors
Chair of the board of directors	Yvonne Brennan
Headteacher	Michelle Woods
Website	www.mountcarmelfirstschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Our Lady of the Magnificat multi-academy company.
- The chair of the governing body has been in post since September 2022.
- The school is a Catholic school, within the archdiocese of Birmingham. Its most recent section 48 inspection under the Education Act for schools of a religious character took place in June 2018.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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 school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, and the senior assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator and the designated safeguarding lead (DSL).
- The inspector spoke with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the chair of the multi-academy company board of directors. The inspector also met with the multi-academy directors of school improvement.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, computing and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector checked safeguarding arrangements and school records. The inspector discussed safeguarding policies and case studies with the DSL. He talked to teachers and other staff about the safeguarding training they had received and how they put this training into practice.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime and talked to parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text responses. He also considered responses from staff to the online inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Patrick Amieli, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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