

Inspection of a good school: St John Roman Catholic Primary School

Providence Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6TT

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

St John Roman Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending school, where staff know the pupils well. Pupils benefit from positive relationships with staff. Pupils are attentive in class and listen to instructions given to them. They speak enthusiastically about the support their teachers give them.

Pupils behave well. They are happy and safe at school. Pupils understand the high expectations staff have for their behaviour. They are well supported to manage how they behave. For example, pupils talk maturely about 'zones of regulation' which is all part of the support they receive. As a result, pupils know the difference between right and wrong and understand the consequences of the choices they make.

Bullying is rare. If it happens, pupils know adults will deal with it promptly. There are strategies in place to ensure that pupils are able to share any concerns. They speak of how the school has a 'worry monster' in the classrooms who works with their teacher and helps take away their concerns. This helps make pupils feel safe.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about clubs and trips. These experiences enhance what the pupils learn in the classroom and give pupils the opportunity to use what they know in more depth.

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

Leaders have planned a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. The curriculum sets out what pupils need to learn. It begins in early years and clearly shows how learning will progress as pupils move up the school. Teachers regularly check pupils' knowledge and generally make adaptations to the curriculum where necessary to ensure pupils can access their learning effectively.

Leaders have provided training for staff on how to teach most of their intended curriculum well. Teachers' subject knowledge is typically secure in subjects such as English and mathematics. As a result, in most subjects, pupils learn more and remember more. For

example, in mathematics, pupils are confident to solve complex problems around calculating perimeter. They can demonstrate how their prior knowledge supports them to do this.

In a small number of subject areas, the curriculum has been introduced more recently than in others. In these subjects, not all teachers are fully secure in their implementation of the curriculum. As a result, pupils' learning and understanding are not as well adapted to ensure pupils achieve as well as they could.

Leaders have prioritised reading. In early years, children start learning to read as soon as they join the school. A systematic approach to teaching phonics and early reading includes a wide range of reading activities ensuring that pupils become fluent and confident readers. When pupils fall behind in reading, teachers quickly identify this and put in place support that successfully helps them to catch up.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the support they need. Leaders work closely with staff to identify and plan appropriate additional support. Pupils with SEND receive specific interventions, precise adaptations to how the curriculum is delivered and specialist resources to help them access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers and, consequently, achieve well.

Leaders have set high expectations for pupils' behaviour in school. Teachers consistently use the agreed behaviour routines. Pupils understand the expectations. This leads to positive behaviour for learning from pupils. As a result, teachers are able to focus on helping pupils learn with little disruption.

Leaders ensure pupils have a range of opportunities beyond the classroom. All pupils have equal access to these. Curriculum content and assemblies help to teach pupils about fundamental British values. For example, pupils speak with great insight into democracy and how they use it when selecting class representatives. Carefully planned events, for example visits to London where pupils learn to use transport systems, help to teach pupils valuable life skills.

Staff speak positively about working at the school. They feel leaders manage their workload well.

Trustees and the local governing body offer support to leaders while equally holding them to account effectively. Those responsible for governance have a good understanding of what the school does well and the support it needs.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place comprehensive safeguarding systems. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff are confident in the systems for recording and reporting concerns. Leaders follow up on any concerns in a timely manner.

Trust leaders support leaders to ensure they carry out all necessary checks before staff are appointed to work at the school.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe and are highly knowledgeable about how online safety works. They know to speak to an adult if they are concerned about something.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' recent review of the curriculum has ensured that English and mathematics are being taught effectively. However, in a few areas of the curriculum, teachers are still building the knowledge they need to implement it effectively. This means, in a few cases, adaptations are not made well enough to ensure pupils learn what they need to in order to know and remember more. Leaders should continue to check staff's subject knowledge is secure in all areas of the curriculum so pupils achieve equally well in all subjects.

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 December 2012.

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	138316
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10212399
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	169
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Patrick Leeson
Headteacher	Thomas Timson
Website	www.stjohns4.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	2 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has had significant changes to leadership, including the headteacher who started in September 2021.
- Leaders run a before- and after-school club.
- The religious aspects of the school's provision were last inspected in March 2018 under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

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 governors, representatives of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils about learning and looked at a

sample of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised safeguarding policies, the school's record of background checks of adults at the school and a sample of child protection files. The inspector also spoke with trustees, the chair of the local governing board, the designated safeguarding lead and staff about safeguarding practices at the school.
- The inspector considered the 22 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 22 free-text responses. The inspector also considered the 21 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire. The inspector carried out additional meetings with groups of pupils.

Inspection team

Chris Stainsby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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