

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

The Drive, Dovercourt, Essex CO12 3SU

Inspection date: 4 May 2023

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Joseph's serves its local community well. This is a school full of happiness. Pupils and staff enjoy being members of this tight-knit community where every child is cherished. Pupils know that staff care and look after them well. They trust them to deal with any concerns they may have. Pupils feel safe at school.

Pupils value diversity. They have a strong understanding of celebrating each other's differences. They show respect for one another in their kind behaviour. There is little bullying. Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons.

Pupils take an active interest in their lessons as staff have high expectations of what they can learn. Pupils are of the view that school is fun as well as challenging. They enjoy talking about what they have learned, including the latest class book they are reading.

A wide range of opportunities are offered to develop pupils' interests and leadership. These include being part of school council, eco warriors and learning about water safety on the beach. Pupils recently visited a memory café to develop their understanding of dementia.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and make sure that the work given interests and engages pupils. Teachers are clear about the knowledge, skills, and vocabulary that pupils must learn.

Staff have good subject knowledge. They keep up to date with subject-specific training and access networks in the trust to share best practice. In many subjects, including reading and mathematics, leaders have developed effective systems that enable teachers to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. This helps them to adjust planning and revisit content, helping pupils to make strong progress. However, in a few foundation

subjects, these assessment strategies are at an earlier stage of development. In these subjects, teachers are less clear about which aspects of learning pupils are less secure in.

Developing a love of books and reading is an important feature of school life. Leaders organise many events, such as 'the masked reader' and book fairs, to enthuse pupils. Many pupils read widely and often. They enjoy a diverse range of texts which help develop their understanding of multicultural Britain. Children in Reception enthusiastically engage with the big books and stories that adults read to them.

Leaders have recently reviewed the early reading curriculum. Staff are precise in their teaching of phonics, guiding pupils with expertise. They make sure that pupils have thinking time to apply their phonics knowledge when reading. Staff choose books that match the sounds that pupils know. This means that pupils quickly gain confidence in their reading. Pupils who require extra help get the support they need.

Staff adapt the curriculum effectively in order to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They use strategies in pupils' support plans and carefully plot how to help pupils meet their targets in their education, health and care plans. This includes providing extra input, such as the use of a gym trail, for pupils working on their motor development. Leaders make effective use of external specialists, such as therapists for pupils who have speech, language and communication needs. Parents of pupils with SEND are highly appreciative of the efforts that staff make. Staff regularly go 'above and beyond'.

Staff have high expectations of behaviour. Children in Reception quickly learn routines and copy older pupils who are good role models. During lessons, pupils listen carefully and contribute enthusiastically to group discussions. Pupils play well together. They will make sure to include all. If they need a play friend, they can go to the buddy bench to get a volunteer.

Pupils' holistic development is a priority. The school's ethos and values are threaded through the curriculum and the wider opportunities that pupils receive. Pupils are actively involved in organising church services and contributing to the local community. Pupils learn about the beliefs and customs of other faiths as well as what it is like to live outside of Harwich.

Leaders, including governors, listen to staff and pay attention to their well-being. They work as a team to support each other with workload. Trust leaders and governors have also streamlined their processes to help support senior leaders' workloads.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils well. Adults readily spot when someone is upset or worried. They know how to report concerns should a pupil be at risk of harm, and do so in a timely manner. Staff receive regular training and are alert to the risks that pupils face. Leaders work closely with external agencies so that pupils benefit from appropriate support when

needed. Record-keeping is thorough. Leaders undertake the necessary checks when they appoint staff.

Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe, such as how to behave when they go swimming and how to use the play equipment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders' strategies to check pupils' understanding and retention of knowledge and skills are not fully developed. This means that teachers are not as clear as they could be about which aspects of the curriculum pupils know well. Leaders should continue their work to develop assessment in these subjects so that teachers have a clear view of whether pupils have learned what was intended.

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 predecessor school, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, to be good in February 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	148110
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10269015
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon Fenning
Headteacher	Rebecca Maguire
Website	www.st-josephs-dovercourt.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2020. When its predecessor school, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The trust has delegated some responsibilities for oversight of the school to a local governing body.
- The school has a Christian religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the chair of the trust, the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, staff, and pupils about the school's provision.

- The lead inspector spoke with parents at the start of school.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in and around the school.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to a selection of pupils reading to adults.
- The school's information on behaviour and bullying was reviewed. Inspectors also reviewed safeguarding records and spoke with governors, leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Craige Brown

Ofsted Inspector

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