

Inspection of a good school: Our Lady and St Chad Catholic Academy

Old Fallings Lane, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV10 8BL

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 May 2023

Outcome

Our Lady and St Chad Catholic Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive and flourish at this inclusive and diverse school. Pupils are polite, well-mannered and respectful of all faiths and cultures. They feel safe at school and are proud to be a part of such a positive community. They are a real asset to the school. Bullying is rare, and pupils know whom to speak to if it happens.

Staff have high expectations for pupils. Pupils live up to these expectations. The school's philosophy of 'Strong alone, but unstoppable together' permeates throughout the school, both in lessons and at social times.

Many pupils take part in extra-curricular clubs, such as chess club, drone club, sports clubs and eco-club. The clubs are matched to pupils' interests, and fully include pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As one pupil said, 'There is something for everyone.'

Leaders have prioritised pupils' welfare and well-being. Pupils who require extra support, guidance and nurturing are involved with forest school, the boxing academy and meditation. Local barbers also train pupils to cut hair at the school's very own salon. Some of these pupils have complex needs and some are pupils with SEND. All this work helps pupils to improve their self-esteem and confidence.

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

Leaders know their school well. They have an accurate view of the school's many strengths, and are aware of what the school needs to do to be better. Governors, trust leaders and trustees work alongside the school leaders to ensure that pupils' interests are at the heart of everything that they do. Teachers are supported well, and appreciate the work that leaders do to manage their work-life balance.

The curriculum is well planned and sequenced, from Year 7 to Year 13. It builds on what pupils already know from key stage 2. Teachers carefully select teaching resources and

use strategies to help pupils make links to prior learning. Regular checks are used to find out what pupils know. Most staff then use this information to adapt their teaching to help pupils to understand. However, some teachers do not check that all pupils understand before introducing new learning.

The SEND team knows pupils with SEND well. There is a wide range of ways in which pupils with SEND are supported. This includes the use of the 'Thrive Centre' and 'St Joseph's Centre'. Here, pupils improve their self-esteem and boost their confidence. The SEND team works closely with pupils to identify how to best support their learning and share relevant information with teachers. Most teachers use this to adapt their planning for pupils with SEND. However, some teachers do not use this information when planning lessons. This means that some lessons are not always adapted to take the learning needs of pupils with SEND into account.

Leaders have prioritised improving reading for pupils who find it a struggle. Leaders have identified what each pupil's needs are and created a bespoke support programme which provides them with extra help. Some of these needs include phonics, fluency or comprehension. Pupils enjoy these sessions and are making rapid progress to improve their reading. Sixth-form students are buddied with their younger peers, and they often read together. Leaders have provided each pupil across the school with a reading book to encourage pupils to read. There is also a book vending machine in the school library. However, leaders recognise that not all pupils are reading widely for pleasure.

Pupils are friendly and respectful. During lessons, pupils engage well, and many are confident to share their views and answers with the class. Staff have created an engaging, warm and calm atmosphere, where pupils can achieve their best. The atmosphere during social times is pleasant and vibrant. Some pupils play sports, while others catch up with their friends.

A real strength of the school is its wider development. The curriculum is well planned and sequenced and revisits topics over time. The curriculum is adapted to mirror issues in the local area; for example the issues related to knife crime were recently taught due to an incident in the local area. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, have a good understanding of topics such as healthy relationships, consent and moral issues. Pupils are taught about other cultures and religions, and they particularly enjoy 'culture day'.

Pupils' aspirations and interests are built on from as early as Year 7. As they progress through the school, they continue to receive unbiased careers advice and guidance, which includes about T levels, apprenticeships and visits to universities. Pupils in Year 10 complete work experience. All of this means that pupils are ready for their next steps in education, training or employment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have carried out appropriate recruitment checks on all staff. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. This keeps staff well informed about local issues,

pupils' welfare and changes to policies. Staff know their pupils well and are quick to report any issues. These are dealt with in a timely way to ensure that pupils get the support they need.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe when at home, at school and when online. Pupils know whom to speak to if they have any worries about themselves or their peers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not make full use of the SEND information that leaders provide which details how to support pupils with SEND. As a result, lessons are not consistently adapted to take the learning needs of pupils with SEND into account. Leaders should ensure that all teachers consistently use the information to plan lessons which support the learning of pupils with SEND.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils read widely for pleasure. This means pupils do not fully develop their enjoyment of reading as well as they could. Leaders should provide opportunities for reading to be developed across all aspects of school life to embed a love of reading.
- Some teachers do not check that pupils understand the work before moving on. This means that gaps in their knowledge can widen. Leaders should ensure that good practice is shared across the curriculum so that all that all pupils progress well.

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 school to be good in March 2018.

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	141802
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10282691
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,133
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dr Chris Walker
Principal	Louisa Craig
Website	http://www.olsc.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses ten registered alternative providers for some pupils.
- The school has a Catholic religious character. A section 48 inspection was completed in July 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due before August 2025.

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.

- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the principal, other senior and middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead and the careers lead.
- Inspectors held discussions with those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in geography, mathematics, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's tutor programme. Inspectors also visited tutor time and reading intervention at the start of the day.
- Inspectors met with members of staff, and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to the pupil and staff surveys, as well as to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

Jane Epton

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