

Inspection of a good school: St Julie's Catholic High School

Speke Road, Woolton, Liverpool, Merseyside L25 7TN

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 May 2023

Outcome

St Julie's Catholic High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, are proud to be part of this caring and close-knit school community. A typical view that pupils shared with inspectors was that 'everyone is welcome here; you can be yourself'.

Pupils and students enjoy their learning and they feel safe at school. They know that staff care for them and will listen if they are worried about anything. Leaders do not tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind. They deal with any incidents appropriately.

Leaders expect pupils to follow the principles of the school's founder, which encompass respect, friendship, enjoyment and compassion. Pupils rise to leaders' high expectations. They value the emphasis that leaders place on social and cultural learning alongside academic achievement. This helps them to develop into confident and independent young citizens.

Pupils and students enjoy the many opportunities to make genuine contributions to their school and the wider community. For example, through fundraising for local charities or acting as champions to support their younger peers.

Student leaders from the 1804 Society are especially proud of the work they have done to make the school inclusive for all. For example, they have recently been awarded the Rainbow Flag award for their work to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion.

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

Leaders and governors share an ambitious vision. They are clear that they want all pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to benefit from a high-quality education. An increasing number of pupils choose the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects in key stage 4. In the main, pupils achieve well in these subjects and they are prepared well for further study.

In recent years, senior leaders have taken bold steps to improve the curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have set out a well-considered body of knowledge that they want pupils to build from year to year. However, in a few subjects, these improvements are at an earlier stage. Leaders in these subjects have not defined exactly what pupils should learn and remember in the long term. This hinders teachers in designing learning and makes it difficult for pupils to build new knowledge securely.

Most teachers use effective strategies to ensure that pupils remember what has been taught. When teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning, they address them before moving on. In the small number of subjects where the curriculum is still developing, these strategies are not as successful. Pupils sometimes struggle to remember what they have learned. This makes subsequent learning more difficult for pupils in these subjects.

Most pupils, including students in the sixth form, attend school regularly. Leaders are working with a group of disadvantaged pupils to help them to come to school more often. Although the attendance of these pupils is improving, their previous absences have led to gaps in their learning. Because of this, published outcomes at the end of key stage 4 do not accurately reflect the quality of education at the school. Pupils who attend school regularly achieve well.

Leaders' systems to identify the needs of pupils and students with SEND are thorough. Teachers adapt their delivery of the curriculum so that these pupils can learn alongside their peers. If extra support is needed, leaders organise this carefully so that pupils do not miss out on other lessons.

Leaders have introduced a range of strategies to encourage a love of reading. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, read more often than they did in the past. Leaders have identified those pupils who are not reading as well as they should. These pupils are beginning to catch up because of the suitable support that leaders provide.

Most pupils behave well. They typically treat each other with care and respect. This positive conduct creates a calm atmosphere where learning is rarely disrupted. Leaders deal decisively with any incidents of poor behaviour. Students in the sixth form demonstrate increasing maturity and independence. They are positive role models to younger pupils.

Leaders have designed a thoughtful programme of personal development across all key stages. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, consent and respect for others. They are thoroughly prepared for life in modern society.

Pupils and students access a well-considered careers programme. This encourages high aspirations and highlights strong female role models. Students in the sixth form particularly value this information. They apply successfully to a range of ambitious destinations.

Senior leaders understand in detail which aspects of the school require further development. They have prioritised these appropriately. Governors work closely with

leaders to provide both support and challenge. They help to ensure that leaders' actions are effective.

Staff told inspectors that leaders support them well. They value the changes that leaders have made to reduce their workload. Staff are overwhelmingly proud of their school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of vigilance and care. They ensure that staff and governors receive suitable training so that they are alert to potential signs of harm. Staff report their concerns swiftly if they are worried that a pupil or student may be at risk.

Leaders respond effectively to any concerns. They work closely with other agencies to make sure that pupils get the help that they need.

Leaders have carefully identified the support that potentially vulnerable pupils may need. They are proactive in their approach. For example, leaders' recent work to raise awareness of domestic abuse and sexual violence has been highly effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, in key stages 3 and 4, leaders have not defined clearly enough the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn. This makes it more difficult for teachers in these subjects to help pupils to remember this content in the long term. Leaders should ensure that they are clear about what they want pupils to know, and should ensure that support teachers check how well it has been learned.
- Some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school as often as they should. This has led to gaps in these pupils' knowledge over time. As a result, their achievement by the end of Year 11 is uneven. Leaders should ensure that they address the gaps in pupils' learning so that these pupils can build cumulative knowledge through 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 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	104712
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10286226
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1052
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Brigid Smith
Headteacher	Tim Alderman
Website	www.stjulies.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 April 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2017.
- An acting headteacher has been in post since February 2023.
- Leaders make use of four registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- 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.

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 acting headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also met with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and students about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and students from Years 7 to 13 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes, and met with student leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, leaders' improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding, and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors discussed matters relating to safeguarding with pupils, students and staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and students.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michael Wright

Ofsted Inspector

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