

# Inspection of a good school: St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Junior School

Linacre Road, Willesden Green, London NW2 5BB

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 September 2023

## Outcome

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Junior School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Mary Magdalen's live by the ethos of the school. Pupils understand and demonstrate the values of 'love, excellence, teamwork, determination and respect' through all that they do. Leaders at all levels make sure that these values flow through everything that happens in the school.

Overall, pupils' achievements are strong. The school has a curriculum that seeks to be academically ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is more developed in some curriculum areas than others. Training for all members of staff has been prioritised to ensure that the school's high aspirations are realised across all subjects.

Pupils' behaviour, both inside and outside of lessons, is a strength of the school. Parents and carers, pupils and staff are in agreement with this. Pupils especially enjoy taking on positions of responsibility. They relish the opportunity to be role models for their peers.

Staff and pupils enjoy coming to school each day. Pupils said that the adults work hard to support them in reaching their goals. Pupils feel well cared for and know who they can talk to if they have a concern. Pupils are kept safe.

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

Pupils achieve well here. The school offers an ambitious and aspirational curriculum for all pupils, including for early reading. Across subjects, curriculum thinking has been based on the aims and content of the national curriculum. However, this thinking is more embedded in some subjects than it is for others. This is often the case when the development of the curriculum has given less consideration to the sequencing of knowledge. Sometimes, the order that pupils are taught subject content does not help them to build on their existing understanding. This means that pupils know and remember more in some subjects than they do in others.

Teaching supports pupils' learning by using strategies that help them to grasp ideas and recall them readily. Assessment is used well to identify pupils' misconceptions and the ideas that they are finding difficult to understand. Lessons are then adjusted to best meet the needs of pupils. Teachers also use assessments to plan adjustments to the curriculum over the longer term. This helps to make sure that pupils' knowledge is developing successfully.

The school has a consistent approach to early reading, including phonics. This ensures that pupils' reading develops effectively throughout their time at the school. Reading is highly valued by the school community. Pupils who are in the earlier stages of learning to read benefit from a phonics programme that ensures that they learn and practise sounds step by step. Careful checks on pupils' knowledge mean that those who need extra help with reading are identified and supported immediately. Pupils spoke fondly about a love of reading.

The school provides carefully planned support for pupils with SEND. For example, leaders and staff understand that changes, such as moving school, can be particularly difficult for pupils with additional needs. Careful communication with previous and future schools means that these pupils are well supported to deal with any challenges. Pupils' needs are well understood, and staff receive appropriate training to provide the right extra help and adaptations. This allows all pupils to successfully access the curriculum. The learning of children with SEND is closely monitored. Parents, pupils and teachers are all consulted to ensure that appropriate plans of support are in place.

Pupils show positive behaviour for learning in lessons. Pupils said that their learning in lessons is free from disruption. The school has prioritised routines. These make sure that, across year groups, there are commonly understood and applied expectations for behaviour. This ensures consistently positive behaviour, both in class and at social times.

The school aspires to support pupils' wider development through all that it does. This begins with the reinforcement of moral values, such as service and responsibility. Pupils are given positions of responsibility, such as acting as playground prefects, who support the safety of pupils at breaktimes. There is an elected school council, which has recently worked to enhance the lunchtime menu. Pupils also take part in a range of outings and clubs outside of lessons. The school makes sure that all pupils can take part. While the extra-curricular offer is broad and inclusive, the school has not fully considered how these wider experiences link together coherently to enhance pupils' learning and all-round development.

Staff appreciate the way that leaders continually look to improve opportunities for their professional development. They understand their role in ensuring that pupils learn and achieve successfully.

The governing body has a positive impact on the running of the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, curriculum sequencing has not considered enough how to make sure that what pupils learn follows on well from what has been learned before. This means that pupils' understanding and recall of subject content is more secure and detailed in some subjects than others. The school should ensure that the sequencing of knowledge in all subjects allows pupils to build successfully on prior learning. The school should focus on helping pupils to build on previous knowledge in progressive steps.
- In a few instances, the school's provision for pupils' broader development is not planned in a coherent way. Over time, this means that opportunities to enrich and deepen pupils' understanding and experiences are missed. The school should strengthen its broad offer by making sure that opportunities beyond the classroom link together coherently to expand pupils' horizons and experience of the wider world.

## 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 July 2014.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and

pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101542
<b>Local authority</b>	Brent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10293220
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	267
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Robert Allan
<b>Executive headteacher</b>	Elsa Fonseca
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.marymag.brent.sch.uk">www.marymag.brent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This is the first inspection since the school federated with the Convent of Jesus and Mary Catholic Infant School in November 2021.
- Leaders use no alternative provision.
- The school is a Roman Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Westminster. The school received its most recent section 48 inspection in June 2018.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher and other senior leaders. He also met with the chair of governors, other members of the governing body, the school improvement consultant and representatives from the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: computing, early reading and mathematics. The inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers.
- The inspector also visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work for some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector spoke to pupils during lesson visits. He observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. The inspector spoke to staff about behaviour and about their workload in the school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, pupils and staff.

### **Inspection team**

Luke Stubbles, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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