

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy

Alvaston Street, Alvaston, Derby, Derbyshire DE24 0PA

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Saul Ratcliffe. This school is part of the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kevin Gritton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Noon.

What is it like to attend this school?

St John Fisher is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils enjoy their learning and are happy. They feel safe. Pupils behave sensibly in class and around the school. Children learn the routines they need to follow as soon as they join the school. This helps them to be ready for learning. Staff, including those in the early years, are ambitious for what they want pupils to achieve.

Pupils show respect towards staff and each other. They are polite and well mannered. They enjoy their lessons. Pupils work hard and are proud of the high-quality work they produce.

At lunchtimes, pupils make good use of the library. They can also attend Lego club, languages club and maths club. There are residential visits for older pupils. Pupils develop leadership skills through being reading champions, eco-champions and school councillors.

Parents and carers value the work that the school does to support their children. One parent stated, 'I would highly recommend this school to any other parent. I'm so glad my children have such a wonderful environment to be in whilst getting their education. I cannot thank the teachers and other staff enough for all they do'.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn as much as possible. The school has worked hard to improve the curriculum. Staff's subject knowledge has improved. Curriculum plans identify what pupils need to know and when teachers should teach this knowledge. Usually, this is sequenced thoughtfully. For example, in science, pupils learn about solids, liquids and gases in Year 4 before they learn about filtration and evaporation in Year 5. This helps pupils build on what they know. Teachers deliver the curriculum well in most subjects. In a small number of subjects, teachers do not deliver the curriculum as well. Pupils do not achieve as highly in these subjects.

Reading is a whole-school priority. Children begin learning to read as soon as they start in Reception. All staff are well trained and teach daily phonics sessions effectively. Teachers make sure that books match the letters and sounds that pupils know. The school identifies pupils who may be falling behind in the reading curriculum. These pupils receive extra support to catch up. Teachers inspire pupils when they read to them every day. Pupils practise reading regularly. This helps them to become more fluent and improves their comprehension.

Staff make regular checks to find out what pupils know. This helps them to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils regularly revisit what they have learned in memory tasks. This helps them to know more and remember more.

Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum. The school has made significant progress in identifying and assessing the needs of SEND pupils. Staff deliver carefully planned support in lessons. Teachers adapt their teaching to meet these pupils' needs. SEND pupils produce work of good quality and achieve well.

There is a well-sequenced curriculum for children in the early years. Children gain a wide range of knowledge and skills. They are well prepared for their next phase of learning in Year 1. There is a sharp focus on developing children's communication and language skills. Children enjoy learning through well-planned activities. They play happily together and demonstrate strong social skills.

The school works closely with families to promote pupils' attendance. Expectations are clear and support is given to reduce pupil absence. As a result, many families now ensure that their children attend school more regularly.

The school adds to pupils' personal development in many ways. Pupils learn about the importance of good mental health. They know about online safety, road safety and the importance of eating healthily. The school celebrates difference and diversity in the local community through events such as European Languages Day. Pupils understand British values. Pupils can recall educational visits that they have made and are able to link these to learning in science and history. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to have wider experiences beyond the classroom.

The multi-academy trust and governors are committed to giving pupils the best possible experience. They share the school's passion to develop further. Trustees and local governors are very well informed about the work of the school. They hold leaders to account, but also support them to bring about improvements in the school. Leaders work very well with staff. They provide regular training. They consider staff's well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Most subject curriculums are well planned and sequenced with the key knowledge pupils need to know identified. Core subjects are implemented well. However, in some foundation subjects, the planned curriculums are not as well implemented. As a result, teaching does not sharply focus on the key knowledge pupils need to learn. Some pupils do not achieve as well in these subjects. The school should ensure that teachers have the expertise to deliver the intended curriculum in all subjects.

- The school does not yet provide a sufficiently wide range of opportunities outside of the academic curriculum. As a result, the school does not always nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests as well as it should. Leaders should ensure that all pupils can access a wide range of opportunities outside of the academic curriculum.

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

Unique reference number	138514
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10298483
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	195
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
CEO of the Trust	Kevin Gritton
Headteacher	Saul Ratcliffe
Website	www.stjohnfisherderby.srscmat.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since April 2023.
- The school is part of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- This is a Catholic School. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2022. This is an inspection of the school's religious character.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and took that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and the early years leader.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and art. To do this, they met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also listened to pupils reading to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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. Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school site and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted online surveys for staff and parents. An inspector spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the trust and the chair of the local governing board.

Inspection team

Stephen Long, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Fullwood	Ofsted Inspector

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