

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

Lickey Road, Rednal, Birmingham, West Midlands B45 8TD

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Inspection dates:

15 to 16 November 2023

## Outcome

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

The principal of this school is Linda Southerton. This school is part of Lumen Christi Catholic Multi Academy Company (MAC), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul Collins-Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Vince.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and the extensive wider opportunities on offer. This includes Irish dancing and trips to places of worship as part of multi-faith week. The school sets high expectations for all pupils to do well. Pupils study a wide range of subjects and achieve well, including in reading and mathematics. There are additional clubs, such as French for younger children.

Pupils are polite, courteous and behave very well. Relationships with others are strong. They take on numerous roles, for example as play leaders or 'eco council' members. They have a strong sense of compassion. They are generous, supporting the homeless, and welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. This work is led by the pupil 'mini vinnies' and 'caritas' ambassadors. The school is a designated school of sanctuary. 'Spud club' promotes healthy eating and supports families in need.

The 'five fingers of safeguarding' ensures that all pupils know of at least five adults they can speak to if they are worried. As a result, they feel very safe in school. They trust their teachers to help them sort out any worries that they may have.

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

The school has adapted well the ambitious curriculum plans designed by the MAC. They have ensured in geography, for example, that it reflects the local area of Longbridge when comparing contrasting locations. It is also sequenced well to allow flexibility if pupils need to revisit learning. Where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND),

or are learning English as an additional language, further adjustments ensure that they can access similar learning to the rest of the class at an appropriate level.

All curriculum plans build on the learning that starts in early years. In geography, for example, Reception children can discuss different types of transport, using a wide variety of vocabulary, including gondola and tuk-tuk. This draws directly from their own experiences. Older pupils can discuss issues maturely, such as river pollution and the impact of litter on the environment.

Children in Reception make a rapid start with learning to read as soon as they start the school. The school has an appropriate phonics scheme, taught consistently across all groups. All staff are well trained to teach early reading. Where pupils find reading difficult, are at an early stage of reading or have fallen behind, effective additional support helps them catch up. There are daily one-to-one reading sessions for those who need it. Books are well matched to the letters and sounds pupils know. Consequently, pupils quickly gain the knowledge and skills in order to be confident and fluent readers.

Learning in mathematics also starts very early. Children in Reception can work confidently and independently on mathematics tasks, including using technology. They also choose free-flow activities where learning is linked well to the overall mathematics aims. Older pupils have a secure understanding of different methods to solve problems.

Most teachers use questioning effectively, to elicit responses from pupils in lessons and to spot if pupils have any gaps in their learning. Most teachers use the information from these questions to address any misconceptions pupils may have. However, this is not always the case. On occasion, teachers do not identify those pupils who are stuck or need further help. As a result, some gaps in knowledge go unaddressed.

Rates of absence and persistent absence were significantly above the national average up to 2022, including for disadvantaged pupils. They were better in 2023 due to the school's tenacious efforts in working with parents. This term, rates have improved rapidly compared to this time last year.

Pupils engage well in their learning. The school responds effectively to the very small number of pupils who have difficulties managing their behaviour. As a result, behaviour is calm and orderly throughout the school.

The school promotes personal development very well. Pupils make choices, such as fundraising for Christmas hampers and voting for the school council. They understand the rule of law. In addition, they understand about different faiths through trips to a mosque, a gurdwara and Jewish and Buddhist temples. They have heard first-hand from refugees about their experiences. High numbers of pupils participate in the art and drama clubs. The school tracks take up of clubs, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

Staff appreciate how workload is considered by leaders. They are particularly appreciative of the revised marking policy. Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development well through visits and subject links. Senior leaders provide many

opportunities for less experienced staff to receive training and take on leadership responsibilities to develop their careers further.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Teachers' use of questioning does not always identify those pupils who may not understand their learning. As a result, some gaps in knowledge go unaddressed. Leaders should ensure that when teachers are questioning pupils, they are able to identify those who may need additional help to understand their work.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence have been high over time. As a result, some pupils have missed key learning. Leaders should ensure that the recent improvements in rates are maintained and improved further, including for disadvantaged pupils.

## **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' is used to mean pupils with 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>	141669
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10282690
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	192
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	David Holmes
<b>Principal</b>	Linda Southerton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stcolumba.bham.sch.uk">www.stcolumba.bham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	13 and 14 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The principal was appointed in September 2022. She was previously head of school for two years under an executive headteacher.
- The school standards committee is responsible for the governance of the school. Most members have joined since the school's last inspection, including the chair and vice-chair.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school has a Christian ethos. The school's last Section 48 inspection was in February 2020. The next scheduled inspection is due in 2026.

## 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 this evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held meetings with the principal, assistant principals and other leaders and staff.
- The inspector spoke to several groups of pupils.
- The inspector met four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- The inspector spoke by telephone to a representative from the diocese.
- The inspector met the chief executive and head of standards from the Lumen Christi Catholic MAC.
- The inspector took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View free-text service, the online questionnaire, as well as the staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also listened to pupils' reading, and discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, including in the early years foundation stage.
- 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.

### **Inspection team**

Mark Sims, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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