

Inspection of St Louis Catholic Primary School

Harris Court, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 2XZ

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

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

The headteacher of this school is Catherine Machin. This school is part of St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Joe Richardson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Catherine Davies.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Louis Catholic Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Louis Catholic Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Louis Catholic Primary School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this supportive and aspirational environment. They embody the school's values to be ambitious, brave and caring. The school has high expectations of pupils' achievements, including for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils achieve well across the curriculum. Classrooms are purposeful and joyful.

The school ensures that pupils develop into responsible young citizens through leadership opportunities, such as those of house captains, elected school council members or librarians. Pupils are polite, kind and considerate of one another. All pupils are 'buddies' for those in younger years or who are new to the school. The school is a welcoming community that helps everyone feel safe and valued.

Pupils love learning and know the value of it. They are highly motivated to succeed and to give their best in everything they do. Pupils are particularly proud when they receive 'pupil of the week' for excellent work or effort. They work together well and demonstrate excellent cooperation at social times and in lessons. Even in the youngest years, children are remarkably thoughtful and consider the needs of others.

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

The school has an ambitious, broad and thoughtfully developed curriculum that builds well on what pupils know. Staff know the key knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to understand in each subject. The school is committed to continuous improvement, routinely evaluating the curriculum and making intelligent additions where appropriate.

Early reading is prioritised, so that pupils become fluent readers as soon as possible. Staff model sounds with precision, which helps pupils learn to read quickly. Reading is embedded into the school culture, with regular use of the library, reading challenges and visits to places such as the Roald Dahl Museum. Pupils love reading. They enjoy listening to staff read with enthusiasm and other enriching opportunities linked to reading.

Children in Nursery and Reception enjoy a flying start. Staff choose resources and activities that promote children's learning and independence. Interactions between staff and children are highly purposeful and engaging. Staff know the importance of these early years and they develop children's communication and language skills continually. This means that children express themselves articulately and know how to ask for what they need. The school's recent focus on developing how children manage their emotions has worked extremely well. Children are confident in doing this and can explain how they feel with increasing independence.

Children's highly positive start in early years means that they have strong foundations of knowledge that support the next stage of learning. Beyond

Reception, staff follow the curriculum closely and have secure subject knowledge across all areas of learning. Pupils with SEND are provided with expert support by staff so they learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Pupils achieve well. Staff ensure that activities help pupils to practise what they have learned and connect knowledge together. When staff question pupils most effectively, this draws out misconceptions, which are addressed quickly. Pupils therefore develop a deep understanding of the subject and apply what they know to new learning and situations effectively. However, in some subjects, gaps in pupils' understanding are not identified and then addressed as well. This means that pupils sometimes tackle activities in lessons without the important knowledge that they need to achieve as well as they could.

The school celebrates pupils' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils talk about their learning eagerly and are engaged actively in lessons. They follow routines and rules enthusiastically. If pupils demonstrate more challenging behaviour, staff take prompt, appropriate and proportionate action. Pupils take on roles as 'playground pals' and 'mind mentors' to provide thoughtful help to pupils who feel unsettled or need someone to talk to.

Pupils are responsible and keen to do what is right for themselves and others. They contribute to the community as junior road safety officers, promoting road safety in school. Staff ensure that pupils are prepared well for life beyond school, teaching pupils about the appropriate use of social media and their digital footprint. This is an inclusive community where pupils develop a well-rounded understanding of the world, different cultures and people with different backgrounds.

Leaders are driven by a moral purpose and strive for continual improvement. They are highly knowledgeable and ensure that pupils' interests are at the centre of their decision-making. Staff, including early career teachers, are well supported, which enables them to focus on teaching. Parents and carers appreciate how the school informs them about what pupils learn and how they can support this at home.

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, staff do not systematically check pupils' understanding. This means that gaps in what pupils know are not always identified and then addressed. The school needs to continue to develop how staff assess pupils' knowledge in lessons, so that pupils build a fully secure and really deep understanding in all subjects.

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	148674
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10267857
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Catherine Davies
CEO of the trust	Joe Richardson
Headteacher	Catherine Machin
Website	www.stlouisrccschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2019.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic school in the Diocese of Northampton. Its most recent inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 for schools of a religious character was in September 2021.
- The school joined St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust in January 2022.

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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff, pupils and representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the trust and the diocese and a representative of the alternative provision.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history, design and technology, and physical education. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff questionnaire, as well as the views of pupils that were gathered throughout the inspection.
- 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.

Inspection team

Ally Aldridge-Gibbons, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Darren Aisthorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Britnell	Ofsted Inspector

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