

Inspection of a good school: Finchley Catholic High School

Woodside Lane, Finchley, London N12 8TA

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

Outcome

Finchley Catholic High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a happy and welcoming place to be. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are a strength. Leaders have established strong routines that are understood and followed throughout the school. Pupils are respectful towards staff, and to their peers in class and around the school. They are safe. Beth, the therapy dog, provides support to improve pupils' mental health.

Many parents commented on how effectively the school supported their children's move from primary school to secondary school. Students in the sixth form said how welcomed and respected they felt when they started in Year 12, and shared how leaders made great efforts to ensure that their start in Year 12 went smoothly.

The school has high expectations of pupils' academic achievements and their attitudes towards others. Leaders have also ensured that pupils study a wide range of knowledge across a broad range of subjects. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One parent or carer, typical of many, said: 'Teachers have gone above and beyond our expectations.'

Leaders organise a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. 'Lab rats' science club, modern foreign languages food club and chess club are popular. Independent careers advice and guidance encourages pupils and students in the sixth form to be ambitious for their futures.

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

Leaders have worked closely with staff and subject leaders to improve the curriculum across all subjects. Mostly, leaders' curriculum thinking continually builds pupils' knowledge. In art, for example, pupils in Year 7 confidently analyse colour used in stained glass windows and by Year 11 they use their skills to analyse how artists such as Turner and Munch used colour.

Teachers have expert subject knowledge that supports pupils to learn the school's curriculum effectively. Generally, teachers provide clear explanations for pupils to help them learn new content. The quality of pupils' work across subjects is typically high too.

Teachers normally check that pupils understand the key knowledge that they are learning. For example, in mathematics teachers carefully built pupils' knowledge of key content. Staff identified pupils' misconceptions quickly and then re-taught concepts where necessary.

However, on occasion, the school does not identify and address pupils' misconceptions as routinely. Therefore, some pupils do not understand with sufficient depth some of what they are learning, or the vocabulary that they use to speak and write. Occasionally, pupils are not given the necessary time to memorise key knowledge securely.

Leaders make clear their high expectations of pupils' behaviour. When pupils struggle to meet these high expectations, leaders support pupils and work closely with their families to improve pupils' behaviour successfully. Students in the sixth form are mature and ambitious for their futures. All this enables pupils' learning to proceed uninterrupted and without distraction.

The school has maintained a focus on pupils' attendance and punctuality since the school reopened to all after the COVID-19 pandemic. The school's successful work has had a positive impact on raising pupils' attendance rates overall.

The school has well-established systems in place to identify and support pupils with SEND. Usually, teachers adapt teaching and resources so that pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers. This is reflected in positive published academic outcomes for these pupils over time. Leaders encourage a culture of reading in the school. For example, they have allocated time for all pupils to read for pleasure each week. The school identifies and supports weaker readers to improve their reading confidence and fluency.

Leaders organise many extra-curricular opportunities for pupils across all year groups. The school organises educational visits across all subjects, including in music, drama and history. Pupils are motivated to be ambitious for their futures. They attend 'insight lectures' given by guest speakers who work in professions including law and financial services, and they meet employers from a wide range of industries. Leaders arrange work experience for pupils in Years 10 and 12. As part of this activity, pupils in Year 10 are taught how to write a summary of their skills, achievements and experience, submit a job application and reflect on their time in the workplace afterwards.

The school works hard to improve the quality of education and provides staff with training. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff said that leaders are professional, organised and listen to the views of all. They said that leaders make decisions with their workload and well-being in mind. The governing body challenges and supports leaders in equal measure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, teaching does not check that pupils understand and recall the key content that the school has identified for pupils to know. This means that, sometimes, pupils' misconceptions are not identified and addressed. The school should ensure that in all subjects pupils' understanding and recall of important concepts and key knowledge is checked, and that any misconceptions or gaps are addressed.

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 November 2013.

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	101362
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10289816
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,204
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jane Inzani
Headteacher	Niamh Arnull
Website	www.finchleycatholic.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was carried out in March 2019. It is due for its next section 48 inspection by the end of 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND; personal, social and health education; behaviour; early reading and pupils’ wider development.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the governing body and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, art, modern foreign languages 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 about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 the respective responses to Ofsted’s online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Guy Forbat, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Gareth Cross	Ofsted Inspector
Verity Lane Cartledge	Ofsted Inspector

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