

Inspection of St Luke's Catholic Academy

Pyenest Road, Harlow, Essex CM19 4LU

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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The head of school is Anne Marie Kendal. The school is part of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Johnson. There is also an executive headteacher, Ian Kendal, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe their school as a 'very happy place'. This is because of the nurture and care they receive from adults who help them. The school works hard to make sure pupils attend frequently and on time. Each morning, pupils receive a warm greeting from staff waiting at classroom doors. It means pupils feel safe, settle quickly and are ready to learn.

The school's Christian values are important to pupils. Staff expect pupils to share the values through their work and play. They help guide pupils' behaviour through the school day. Pupils readily recall ideas of respect, honesty and kindness. They know what these things mean. They always look to recognise the values in each other and celebrate this as part of the 'values tree'.

Pupils' sense of responsibility is palpable through the school community. They are highly active in building ideas of citizenship and service. Pupils volunteer to be representatives as 'Mini Vinnies', or they participate in the chaplaincy or CAFOD club. They think of different ways to support the local community and respond to global issues.

Parents are highly positive about the school. They welcome the support and help their children receive from knowledgeable staff.

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

The school has thought carefully about the curriculum pupils learn. It identifies important knowledge, which is used to build pupils' understanding step by step. The curriculum is ambitious and ensures pupils learn a breadth of subjects. A few of the school's curriculum programmes have only been recently revised. While teachers use the information to plan a series of lessons, subject leaders have not yet had the opportunity to make a full check of how well pupils secure a deep knowledge in these subjects.

Subject plans begin from the early years through to Year 6. At the start, adults design activities to support children's interactions. This helps to build children's communication skills and confidence well. For example, adults use their knowledge of the children to question and prompt speaking while exploring in the garden. As pupils move through the school, they continue to build their knowledge successfully.

Teachers present learning in interesting ways. They weave in key values by making links across subjects. This works well where staff have secure subject knowledge. However, not all adults have the same level of subject expertise. This means they do not precisely identify the key knowledge pupils need to know. In a few aspects, pupils are not fully secure in their learning.

The school's approach to assessing pupils' knowledge is well thought out. Staff ask questions to check what pupils remember through the lesson. Teachers make effective use of what they find out to revisit and recap previous learning.

The school has high expectations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' needs are accurately identified. Staff use information well to adapt teaching plans so that pupils access the curriculum. This means pupils with SEND achieve as well as they should across every subject.

The teaching of reading is a strength across the school. Staff understand how to teach phonics systematically. This includes for pupils who may speak English as an additional language and arrive later at the school. Adults regularly assess how pupils progress with their reading. They provide extra help for those who struggle. This helps pupils to catch up quickly. Pupils act as reading champions to encourage the love of reading across every class. They share their favourite stories and introduce competitions to challenge other pupils to read frequently.

Pupils understand the importance of working hard and trying their best. They are respectful and attentive towards each other and adults. Pupils follow routines to help establish a cooperative and joyful time during break and lunch periods.

The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils' personal development, including clubs, activities and visits. Pupils participate in school council elections to learn about democracy and the rule of law. Visitors share experiences of their professions. This builds pupils' aspirations for what they may do in the future. They learn about diversity and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The trust knows the school well. It plays an active role in supporting the school's work. Effective partnerships between the schools in the trust provide strong support for the professional development of staff. Staff acknowledge that this helps them to have a clear understanding of their roles as part of a collaborative team. Staff are proud of the school and enjoy working here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the learning programmes created by leaders are not yet fully established. Leaders have not yet had sufficient opportunity to fully evaluate how these plans are working. As a result, pupils have not yet secured the depth of knowledge to secure their understanding of these subjects. Leaders should

ensure that they make effective use of their checks so that all their curriculum programmes best support pupils' achievement.

- Some teachers do not have enough expertise to deliver leaders' planned curriculum consistently well. They do not have a precise understanding of all the key knowledge pupils need to learn. This leads to misconceptions in pupils' understanding. Leaders should ensure that they continue to provide the training and support to implement all aspects of the curriculum effectively.

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	139577
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10287121
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Johnson
Headteacher	Ian Kendal (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.st-lukesrc.essex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic-Multi Academy Trust. It became part of the trust in August 2013.
- This is a Catholic school in the Diocese of Brentwood. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in June 2023.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school manages a before-school breakfast club.

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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, teachers, members of the trust, including the chair of the trust, and the chair of the local governing board. The inspectors also met with parents informally as they brought their child to school and collected their child at the end of the day.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a range of children's work.
- Inspectors also scrutinised curriculum plans for music.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders and staff; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lisa Massey

Ofsted Inspector

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