

Inspection of Saint Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic Academy

Cumber Lane, Whiston, Liverpool, Merseyside L35 2XG

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 April 2024

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

The headteacher of this school is Lee Peachey. The school is part of the Pope Francis 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 (CEO), Andrew Dawson and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Isobel Macdonald-Davies.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff foster positive relationships with their pupils. Most pupils are happy at the school. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. Staff know their pupils well and promote positive attitudes to learning. Pupils know whom they can talk to with any worries they may have.

The school is ambitious for pupils to succeed. Pupils are increasingly benefiting from the improvements that the school has made to the quality of education that it provides. However, pupils learn better in some subjects than in others. This is because the curriculum is not delivered consistently well.

The school has raised its expectations of how pupils behave in school. Pupils' behaviour during breaktimes and when moving between lessons is generally calm. However, there remain a small minority of pupils who misbehave in lessons and do not follow the school's behaviour policy. Pupils told inspectors that their learning is disrupted in some of their lessons.

An increasing number of pupils benefit from a variety of extra-curricular activities. The school has recently improved the range of activities that pupils can attend after school. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about visits to the theatre, opportunities to participate in music and sports competitions and a variety of after-school clubs.

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

The school, with the support of the trust, has taken effective action to address a legacy of weaknesses in the curriculum. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study a broad range of subjects at key stage 3. At key stage 4, the school has raised pupils' aspirations. This means that the proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is increasing. The school has also considered carefully what pupils need to learn and when this content should be taught. Each subject curriculum sets out clearly for staff the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn.

Most teachers have strong subject knowledge. Where this is not the case, the school provides opportunities for teachers to overcome gaps in their curriculum knowledge. In some subjects, teachers confidently provide clear explanations and ask probing questions of their pupils. However, in other subjects there is variation in the way that the curriculum is delivered. Sometimes teachers do not choose the most appropriate methods to help pupils to understand key knowledge. On some occasions, teachers do not check carefully that pupils understand what they have learned before introducing new learning. As a result of these weaknesses, some pupils do not remember important information and they develop large gaps in their learning.

The school and the trust have taken action to improve the identification of the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND are identified quickly and

accurately. The school has recently provided teachers with more information and training on how to support these pupils more effectively in the classroom. However, some teachers do not adapt the delivery of the curriculum consistently well to ensure that pupils with SEND understand what is taught. This limits their achievement.

The school has made reading a priority. It has developed a wide range of strategies to ensure that pupils who struggle to read are identified swiftly. These pupils receive appropriate support to make swift and sustained improvement in reading. Consequently, more pupils are reading with greater fluency. This is making it easier for them to access the curriculum than was the case in the past.

Recently, following an increase in poor behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes, the school has reviewed its procedures for managing those pupils who do not respect the school's behaviour policy. Following these changes, suspensions are on the decline and pupils and staff agree that behaviour is getting better. However, some staff do not apply the behaviour policy consistently well. As a result, a small number of pupils in each year group continue to cause disruption in the school.

The school has taken appropriate action to address the barriers that stop some pupils from attending school regularly. For example, it has increased the capacity within the attendance team. Staff work with pupils, and their families, to help improve their attendance rates. Overall attendance is beginning to rise. However, despite the school's efforts, some pupils, including some with SEND and some who are disadvantaged, do not attend school as often as they should.

The school has prioritised pupils' personal development. The personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) is well designed and frequently reviewed so that it meets the current needs of pupils in the school. Pupils have opportunities to learn about healthy relationships, how to stay safe and fundamental British values. However, the PSHE curriculum is not delivered consistently well across the school. Consequently, some pupils are not as well prepared for life beyond school as others.

The school organises a wide range of careers lessons and careers-related events for pupils from Year 7 upwards. Pupils are well informed about their future options. There are opportunities to visit further and higher education colleges and to learn about apprenticeships. All pupils in Year 10 take part in work experience.

The trust and the school have wisely identified the priorities for improvement. They have thought carefully about the appropriate pace of change so that the improvements that they make can be sustained over the long term.

The trust has supported the school by appointing new, experienced staff in various positions. This has strengthened the school's capacity for improvement. Staff told inspectors that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being when changes to policy and practice are introduced. Trustees and members of the local governing body know the school well and provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not delivered consistently well across different subjects. As a result, in some subjects, many pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This hinders how well they progress through the curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers are fully equipped to deliver curriculum content consistently well so that pupils know and remember important knowledge.
- Some teachers do not check pupils' understanding well enough. This means that pupils develop misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge which go unchecked. The school should ensure that teachers identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge so that they can build on what they know when new learning is introduced.
- Some teachers do not adapt their delivery of the curriculum to support pupils with SEND well enough. This means that some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that teachers are suitably trained to support pupils with SEND to achieve well.
- A small number of pupils in each year group continue to cause disruption in lessons and around school. This is because some staff do not apply the behaviour policy consistently and effectively. As a result, other pupils are not able to learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that staff implement behaviour strategies consistently and effectively so that learning is not disrupted.
- Some pupils, including some with SEND and some who are disadvantaged, do not attend school often enough. These pupils are not accessing the full curriculum and miss out on important learning. The school should develop further its analysis of patterns of attendance and seek out different strategies to work constructively with parents and carers to overcome the barriers that stop pupils' from attending school.

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	148534
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10321471
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	720
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of trust	Isobel Macdonald-Davies
CEO of the trust	Andrew Dawson
Headteacher	Lee Peachey
Website	www.stedmundarrowsmithcatholicacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Saint Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic Academy converted to become an academy school in May 2021. When its predecessor, Saint Edmund Catholic School, was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2019, it was judged to be inadequate.
- The school is part of the Pope Francis Multi-Academy Trust. It joined this trust in May 2021.
- Saint Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic Academy is a faith school. It is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in September 2023. The school is awaiting confirmation from the diocese about its next section 48 inspection.
- 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.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at three registered alternative providers and at one unregistered alternative provider.

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 that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust and trustees.
- An inspector spoke to representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's improvement plans, records of governing body meetings and analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took into account 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 carried out deep dives in English, art and design, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and 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 and visited some lessons in those subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Timothy Gartside, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Niamh Howlett	Ofsted Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Yarwood	Ofsted Inspector

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