

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy

Marley Road, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire SK12 1LY

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
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 Nora Armstrong-Boyle. This school is part of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic 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), Mark Mountcastle, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Kalnins.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Paul's 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 are proud of their school mission statement. They aspire 'not to have more but to be more' in all that they do. Pupils are happy in school. They enjoy learning and they work hard. Pupils rise to meet the high expectations that the school has for them academically and achieve well.

Pupils attend school regularly. They relish the many opportunities that they are given, including visits to museums, art galleries and the local library. Pupils are especially proud to perform with an orchestra each year.

Pupils take on board leadership roles, such as acting as eco-warriors and house captains, with gusto. They have set up their own school parliament so that they can help make the school even better. Through these roles, pupils make a highly positive contribution to their school and community. For instance, they raise money for charity and promote equality through online video blogs.

Pupils benefit from the school's calm and purposeful environment. Children in the early years quickly learn to follow the school's clear routines. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school is exemplary. During lunchtimes, pupils take the lead in activity sessions that all pupils can take part in. This promotes their physical health and encourages pupils of all ages to play, interact and have fun together.

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

The school has created a well-ordered curriculum that begins in the early years. In the Reception class, children receive an excellent start to their education. They benefit from a curriculum that is extremely well designed. Staff use highly effective questions and prompts to draw out key learning from the children. They design exciting learning activities that help children to develop enquiring minds. Staff in the early years also make sure that children master the fundamental skills of early reading, writing and mathematics. Children are exceptionally well prepared for learning in Year 1.

The high expectations that the school has for children's early writing development are not mirrored consistently as pupils move into key stage 1 and beyond. For example, teachers do not support pupils well to develop a secure pencil grip and to form letters correctly. This hinders the quality of pupil's written communication across school.

In key stages 1 and 2, the curriculum sets out the knowledge that pupils should learn in a logical order. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn well in most subjects. Staff deliver the curriculum with expertise and enthusiasm. They skilfully design learning activities that help pupils to make connections between what they already know and new learning. Pupils' recall of their current learning is secure.

In a small number of subjects, some pupils struggle to remember the key knowledge that has been delivered in previous key stages. This is because the school has not devised clear assessment strategies to check that pupils have learned and remembered this knowledge over time. This results in some pupils not being as well prepared as they should be for future learning in key stage 3 and beyond.

Staff deliver the phonics programme consistently well. They successfully share their knowledge with parents and carers, who attend school workshops. This enables parents to support their children to develop greater fluency and confidence in reading. Children enjoy learning about letters and the sounds that they make as soon as they join the Reception class. Skilled staff provide pupils with additional support, when this is required. This is effective and helps those pupils who need learning to be revisited to keep up with their peers.

Older pupils enjoy a range of literature. They spoke with enthusiasm about different authors and books. The pupil librarians are proud of the school library. They select new books from visits to the library van and provide recommendations for others in school. Year 6 enjoy reading time with their buddies in the Reception class.

Pupils' additional needs are quickly and accurately identified. Pupils with SEND achieve well and receive the same broad curriculum offer as their peers. They are fully supported by skilled and well-trained staff. Pupils with SEND take part in all aspects of school life. They attend clubs, go on overnight visits and take on leadership roles.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are enthusiastic and keen to share their knowledge with visitors. Pupils develop as mature individuals due to the exemplary provision that they receive to support their personal development. Pupils learn about online safety and understand both the benefits and dangers that the internet can bring. Pupils develop their talents and interests beyond the academic curriculum, whether in the annual talent show, or competing in sporting tournaments. They also enjoy taking part in the vast offer of clubs, such as gardening, Latin and the writer's cafe.

Trustees, and members of the local governing body, understand and fulfil their statutory duties well. They hold the necessary skills to be able to provide appropriate challenge and support to the school. Staff spoke positively about how the school supports their workload and well-being. They appreciate the dedicated time given to them to lead their subjects.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's expectations for pupils' writing skills in key stage 1 are not high enough. This means that some pupils have not mastered legible and accurate letter formation by the time that they leave Year 2. This hinders pupils' writing fluency as they move through school. The school should ensure that the high level of focus it places on pupils' writing skills within the early years is built on and secured across school.
- In a few subjects, teachers do not support pupils to recall and build on learning from previous key stages sufficiently well. Some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects as a result. The school should implement an effective strategy to ensure that teachers regularly revisit previously taught subject content and knowledge.

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	141831
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10255995
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Kalnins
CEO of trust	Mark Mountcastle
Headteacher	Nora Armstrong-Boyle
Website	www.stpauls.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Paul's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school in March 2015. When its predecessor school, St Paul's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust.
- This is a Roman Catholic school. The last section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in November 2021. The next scheduled inspection should take place in the academic year 2026 to 2027.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any ongoing impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with school leaders and members of staff. She also met with the CEO. The lead inspector held discussions with the chair of trustees and representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, they 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 lead inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They spoke with leaders and pupils. Inspectors reviewed samples of pupils' work in these curriculum areas.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including records of governing body meetings, leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school and observed their behaviour at playtime. They considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Sue Dymond, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Howard

Ofsted Inspector

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