

Inspection of a good school: St Francis Catholic Primary School, Maldon

London Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 6HN

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 May 2024

Outcome

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Maldon continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are delighted to attend this welcoming and caring school. Pupils exhibit kindness and respect towards one another, both in lessons and around the school. The shared values and ethos embodied in the school's motto, 'we journey together,' are evident in every aspect of pupils' work.

In several subject areas, pupils achieve well from their starting points. This success also extends to the early years. The youngest children are nurtured in a carefully designed setting that allows them to flourish. Pupils who require extra support receive expert help.

The school offers a variety of opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences to develop their talents and interests. Leadership roles such as prefects and library monitors allow older pupils to support younger ones. Pupils joyfully recount the fun they have participating in various activities, such as creating three dimensional art work. They take pride in successfully challenging themselves in different subjects and in extra-curricular activities, such as archery.

The school council exemplifies pupil involvement in school life. Pupils can serve as ambassadors and role models. They know school leaders will listen to their ideas. Pupils like to raise money for charities and demonstrate their commitment to helping and supporting others.

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

The school has carefully considered the key knowledge it wants pupils to acquire. The curriculum is designed so this knowledge builds on previous learning and connects knowledge across different subjects. In many subjects, including geography and mathematics, pupils meet these high expectations. However, these standards are not yet seen consistently across all subjects.

Where leaders have concentrated their efforts on improving the curriculum, such as in reading, pupils are demonstrating a detailed understanding. Those pupils at the early stages of reading thrive. This is due to teachers having the skills to teach the phonics programme consistently well. Children in the early years are immersed in a language-rich environment from their first day. Older pupils who need help reading confidently receive effective personalised interventions from well-trained staff. Consequently, many pupils, including those pupils who speak English as an additional language, become confident and fluent readers.

However, in a few subjects, the curriculum is not yet detailed enough. Expectations of what needs to be learned and when, are not sufficiently clear. This limits some pupils achieving as well as they could. They sometimes complete work that is too easy for them. The school is taking steps to address this.

The school knows its pupils well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff provide effective tailored support. Leaders have a strong oversight of pupils with SEND. This ensures that pupils with SEND can access the ambitious curriculum and are successful. Staff make appropriate adaptations to learning activities and act promptly upon specialist advice.

A small number of pupils and their families continue to struggle with meeting the school's attendance expectations. The school has sought assistance from the local authority, where necessary, to tackle this. The school takes appropriate action to support these few families and ensure pupils are in school more frequently. Leaders continue to monitor this closely.

Some parents have been concerned by rare instances of unkind pupil behaviour. However, pupils report behaviour that is now more positive. Behaviour around school and incident records show that behaviour is improving. Pupils know that adults will deal with their concerns. The new leadership team have applied the behaviour policy with greater rigour and this is helping all pupils make better choices. Pupils feel safe here.

Pupils can recall with confidence how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the real world. Pupils experience elections to become members of the eco-warrior's group or to be on the school council. This supports an age-appropriate understanding of democracy and fairness. They show empathy and respect to everyone. They are being prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel they can approach leaders about workload and are provided with appropriate support to fulfil their roles. Skilled and experienced governors support and challenge leaders effectively.

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 key knowledge pupils need to learn is not laid out clearly or specifically enough. This means some pupils are not being taught in the depth intended. The school needs to ensure that all teachers know exactly what to teach and in what detail, so that pupils achieve as well as they can in these subjects.
- Sometimes the expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. This means that some pupils find work too easy and the work does not extend their learning well enough. The school should ensure that pupils are provided with learning that matches the ambitious aims of the curriculum.

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 October 2014.

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	115198
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10323625
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Mills
Acting Headteacher	Catherine Peear
Website	www.christthekingfederation.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of a federation with St Joseph’s Primary School.
- There is one governing body serving both schools in this federation.
- The Diocese of Brentwood oversees the school. The most recent inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in April 2022. It was graded outstanding. The next section 48 inspection is due by April 2027.
- Until December 2023, there was an executive headteacher across the federation. The current headteacher is an interim headteacher.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club.
- The school does not use any alternative educational provision.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the interim headteacher, members of the governing body, with a representative of the local authority and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions with curriculum leaders, visited samples of lessons accompanied by school leaders, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- A range of records relating to behaviour and attendance were reviewed.
- Consideration was given to the views of 68 parents through the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, the 64 free-text responses and meeting parents at the end of the school day on the first day of the inspection. The views of staff were considered from meetings held with them and from the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Pupils' views were gathered from their responses to the Ofsted survey and from discussions with the inspector.

Inspection team

Ahson Mohammed, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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