

Inspection of a good school: The Saint John Henry Newman Catholic School

Hitchin Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 4AE

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 July 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is David Carrasco-Morley. This school is part of the Diocese of Westminster 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), Patrick Murden, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Patrick Leeson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be at this school. They are confident, courteous and their behaviour is exemplary. They thrive academically. Pupils benefit from the wide range of opportunities that the school provides such as the School Parliament, Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and a wide range of clubs, including sport, drama and music. Pupils involve themselves enthusiastically with leadership opportunities. They know that the school listens to their ideas. This means that pupils grow in confidence and feel committed to their school community.

Pupils benefit from carefully planned lessons. Classrooms are calm and purposeful places to study. Pupils are studious and eager to learn. They want to do well. They work hard to reach the very high expectations their teachers have of them.

Pupils are confident to be themselves and develop excellent relationships. Pupils know that staff care about them. There is a culture of kindness and acceptance. The school emphasises celebrating pupils' own cultures and this helps pupils to feel welcomed. As a sixth-form student commented, 'Whoever you are, wherever you come from and whatever you believe, you are given a warm welcome here.'

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is well planned and builds on pupils' previous

learning. Teachers receive regular, high-quality training. This ensures they have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum. Teachers know their pupils well. This helps them to provide the support pupils need to be successful. Pupil achievement in national exams is exceptionally high.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with great precision. Teachers use information about how best to support pupils with SEND effectively. They assess what pupils know and can do throughout lessons. They use this information to effectively adapt their teaching. This helps pupils with SEND achieve exceptionally well.

The school emphasises the importance of reading. Reading is a focus across the curriculum. Teachers teach vocabulary explicitly across subjects. There is access to a diverse range of books that the school has expanded recently. Students from the sixth form act as reading ambassadors to assist younger pupils during form time. A range of challenges and competitions further raise the profile of reading across the school. Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. They confidently engage with increasingly challenging texts and literature in their studies. The school identifies pupils who struggle with reading. They get the support they need to catch up through carefully designed work in small groups.

The provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. The school focuses on the development of character and moral code, ensuring that pupils support each other well. Pupils develop their character and life skills through well considered opportunities. These include positions of responsibility and a wide range of trips, visits, clubs and competitions.

The school ensures that attendance is high. Expectations of behaviour are clear. This means that the atmosphere in lessons and around the school is calm and purposeful. The school works hard to ensure the well-being of all pupils. Pupils feel safe and know how to report any concerns to staff. Pupils trust staff to deal with their worries quickly and effectively.

Pupils are ready for the next stage of their education through a comprehensive careers programme. Pupils engage with employers in every year group throughout the school, including the chance to find out about apprenticeships. Former school pupils often return to share their experiences. The school provides suitable work experience placements and offers advice about further and higher education. Pupils leave the school with a secure knowledge of the different opportunities available to them. This allows them to make suitable choices about their future.

The strengths seen elsewhere in the school are equally evident in the sixth form. Sixth-form students build on their learning from key stages 3 and 4. Teachers are expert in supporting students in gaining strong outcomes. Expectations are high. Sixth-form students achieve well and act as role models for younger pupils. They frequently take on leadership positions and organise school events.

Trustees and governors are relentless in helping secure high-quality provision and outcomes for pupils. Training and development for staff is highly prized and their workload is effectively managed. The school has clearly identified how it can improve

further and works hard to continually develop its provision and outcomes for pupils and students. The trust has a clear commitment to equality and diversity but has yet to publish its specific equality objectives and review schedule.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 January 2015.

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	137895
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10318613
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,606
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	396
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Patrick Leeson
CEO of trust	Patrick Murden
Headteacher	David Carrasco-Morley
Website	www.jhn.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 May 2018 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.
- This is a Catholic School. The most recent inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in November 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- 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

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 carried out deep dives in English, art, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors 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. Inspectors also viewed lessons in the creativity curriculum, personal, social, health and citizenship education and modern foreign languages, as well as assemblies and a celebration event.
- 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 lead inspector met with the trust CEO, trust director of secondary improvement, chair of the local governing body and additional governors. The lead inspector also met with school leaders to discuss the school’s approach to supporting disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and pupils’ personal development.
- Inspectors reviewed behaviour and attendance records and observed behaviour in class and around the site.
- Inspectors considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Carole Herman, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sebastian Gasse	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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