

Inspection of a good school: St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Portnalls Road, St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Coulsdon, Surrey CR5 3DE

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 July 2024

Outcome

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

The interim head of school for this school is Caterina Hughes. The school is a single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jana Horrigan. There is also an interim executive headteacher, Mark Hannon, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff have created a nurturing and welcoming school environment where pupils are safe and happy. Pupils are well looked after and know they have trusted adults to talk to if they have concerns. Pupils are well behaved and keen to learn. They collectively decided on the main school rule of 'be kind and respectful'. Pupils show courtesy to each other and to staff and are taught to be considerate, such as through the school's programme of 'random acts of kindness.'

The school values, such as honesty and self-belief, underpin much of its work. Pupils are encouraged to develop a keen sense of responsibility. The school council, for example, help to organise events such as foodbank collections and a 'walk to school competition' to promote environmental awareness.

The school offers various opportunities for all pupils to broaden their learning beyond the classroom, such as outings to various museums and places of interests. Older pupils take part in national science competitions and attend scientific and computing workshops. Pupils enjoy learning different musical instruments and the various rock bands set up by pupils are testament to this. They have many opportunities to perform, including in the school's talent shows and plays and events with local schools.

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

The school's curriculum reflects leaders' ambition for all pupils and is suitably broad and balanced. Pupils in each year group learn a wide variety of subjects and are enthused by their lessons. They achieve well and reach high standards by the end of Year 6. Staff are

well trained to deliver the curriculum as it is set out. They present and explain new knowledge clearly to pupils, and help pupils to recall their prior learning. Staff select lesson tasks carefully to support pupils' learning. In science, for example, pupils carry out regular practical investigations to develop and apply their learning. Pupils in Year 4, for instance, investigated the effect of different liquids on eggshells as part of their learning about tooth decay in science. They analysed the results and drew conclusions about the harmful effects of certain liquids, such as those with high acidity levels.

The curriculum is designed so that pupils build knowledge and skills from early years to Year 6. Staff emphasise subject-specific vocabulary so that pupils can use this in their work. For example, in Reception, staff reinforced mathematical vocabulary when teaching children about measuring capacity and the use of 'more' and 'less'. In computing, pupils in Year 6 talked in detail about the control structures they used when coding their own step counter. Sometimes, however, staff do not check carefully whether pupils have learned and understood what was intended. This means that, occasionally, gaps in knowledge are not picked up and pupils have not learned fully what was intended.

Reading is a priority across the school. From Reception, staff consistently follow a structured phonics programme. Through regular checks, staff know which pupils have gaps in their phonics knowledge. They give targeted additional support to these pupils. This helps pupils to catch up quickly in their phonics and get the practice they need to become confident readers. The school has various initiatives to promote a love of reading including 'book week', well-used reading corners in classrooms, visits to the local library, daily story time as well as a weekly reading assembly for younger pupils. Pupils in Year 6 work with children in Reception as 'reading partners', helping to forge relationships between pupils as well as supporting young readers.

The school identifies pupils with SEND accurately and at an early stage. Staff know their pupils well. They routinely adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs and use personalised strategies to support individual pupils. Staff are rightly proud of the behaviour and attitudes to learning displayed by their pupils. In lessons, pupils are attentive and enthusiastic. Rates of attendance are consistently high.

Leaders, staff, parents and carers work together to ensure that pupils enjoy their time here and receive a high standard of education. Staff feel valued and helped to have a manageable workload. Many leaders are new to their roles and are still getting used to their responsibilities. They are well supported by senior leaders, including in the diocese and the governing body.

Staff ensure that all pupils have access to the wide range of extra-curricular clubs. This includes various sports, arts and crafts and 'woodland warriors'. Pupils are taught about the importance of treating people equally and not tolerating discrimination. Pupils in Year 6 recently learned more about politics and democracy through their own 'mini election'. Pupils worked in their assigned 'political parties' to research and present their party's proposals.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, teachers' checking of pupils' understanding is variable. This means that sometimes misconceptions can go unchallenged, and pupils do not learn the intended curriculum content fully. The school should continue to strengthen classroom practice so that misunderstandings are identified and addressed swiftly.
- Many leaders in the school are new to their roles. As a result, their leadership skills and knowledge are still developing. The school should continue to ensure that leaders at all levels receive the support and development that they need.

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 predecessor school, St Aidan's Catholic Primary School to be good in September 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	142729
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10323420
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jana Horrigan
Headteacher	Mark Hannon (interim executive headteacher) Caterina Hughes (interim head of school)
Website	www.staidansschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Aidan's Catholic Primary School is a single academy trust.
- The school has recently undergone various changes in leadership. The interim head of school was appointed in March 2024, having previously been acting deputy headteacher. This followed the resignation of the previous headteacher who took up post in October 2023.
- An interim executive headteacher was appointed in May 2024 and works part-time at the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a Catholic ethos and is within the Diocese of Southwark. The last section 48 inspection took place in October 2022.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with the interim head of school, the interim executive headteacher and other school leaders.
- The inspector met with four members of the trust board, including the vice-chair, and had telephone discussions with a representative from the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and computing. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- 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 and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered responses to the survey, Parent View, and to the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Jude Wilson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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