

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Holy Family Catholic High School

Virgins Lane, Thornton, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 4UL

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

Holy Family Catholic High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a supportive and caring community that celebrates pupils' talents. Pupils and students are happy and feel safe here. They respect differences between people. The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. Typically, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The school is a calm and positive learning environment. Pupils and students are courteous and respectful. Staff foster strong relationships with pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. In lessons, pupils have a genuine desire to learn. Students in the sixth form behave exceptionally well. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' oracy skills. This helps to build their confidence.

Pupils and students benefit from a vast array of activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, sports, visits to museums and theatres and overseas trips. They enjoy participating in a range of clubs, including sport, music, art and dance. Pupils take pleasure in taking on responsibilities, such as being school ambassadors and supporting local food banks, hospitals and primary schools. Pupils with SEND, including those in the specially resourced provision, are involved in all school activities.

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

The school, together with governors, have high aspirations for all pupils. Pupils are encouraged to be the best that they can be. They follow an ambitious curriculum. The school has carefully identified the important subject knowledge that it wants pupils to

learn from Year 7 to Year 13. The school has designed subject curriculums so that pupils can build their knowledge in a logical order. Pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well across a range of subjects.

Staff use their secure subject knowledge to present new ideas clearly and to explain concepts simply to pupils. In the main, staff successfully use a range of strategies to check what pupils remember. In most subjects, staff ensure that pupils' learning builds on what they already know and can do. However, in a very small number of subjects, some staff do not check carefully enough that pupils' knowledge is secure before moving on to new learning. When this happens, some pupils do not learn as well as they should.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils receive appropriate support from expert staff. This helps them to develop their reading and writing skills. Pupils have opportunities to read ambitious texts and develop their comprehension skills well. They develop a love of reading through regular reading sessions. This guides pupils to develop their confidence and fluency in reading.

The school has clearly laid-out processes to provide support for pupils with SEND. The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND swiftly. It makes sure that pupils in the specially resourced provision receive the specialist support that they need. Staff use appropriate strategies to enable these pupils to access the same learning as their peers. This helps pupils with SEND to remember key learning across a range of subjects.

The school has established clear routines which pupils understand and follow consistently. Pupils behave extremely well in the dining hall and around the school during breaktimes and lesson changeovers. The school has invested in a range of strategies to improve the monitoring of pupils' attendance and to encourage them to come into school. It works effectively to support pupils and their families. This work has resulted in an improvement in many pupils' attendance. However, the attendance rates for a small number of pupils who have barriers to learning is still too high. Consequently, these pupils have gaps in their learning.

The school places a strong focus on supporting pupils' emotional health and well-being. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their independence and resilience. They find out about different faiths and beliefs. Pupils develop a strong understanding of age-appropriate relationships. They learn about democracy and what is right and wrong. They enjoy contributing to the wider community, including by raising money for charities.

Pupils and students spoke highly of the careers guidance that they receive, including learning about apprenticeships and employer visits. Year 11 pupils and sixth-form students appreciate the work experience opportunities that they take part in. This allows them to prepare for the next stages of their lives.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They value the training opportunities that they receive on developing the curriculum. Staff feel that the school considers their workload and well-being. Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They provide effective support and challenge to help the school deliver its inclusive vision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In one or two subjects, occasionally, staff do not check carefully enough that pupils' learning is secure before moving them on to new learning. This prevents some pupils from building on their knowledge. The school should ensure that staff check that pupils' knowledge is secure before introducing new topics and concepts.
- A small number of pupils who have barriers to learning do not attend school as often as they should. They miss valuable learning time, which affects their achievement. The school should continue to support these pupils and their families to improve pupils' attendance.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

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 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	104962
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10347924
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
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	1,009
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Evans
Headteacher	Matthew Symes
Website	www.holyfamilyhighschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Catholic secondary school in the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in September 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place in the 2024/25 academic year.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision on behalf of the local authority for up to eight pupils. The provision caters for pupils with cognition and learning needs. The specially resourced provision opened in September 2023.
- The chair of governors was appointed in September 2023.
- The school uses three registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- 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 spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He spoke with a member of the archdiocese. He also spoke on the telephone with two representatives of the local authority and with some alternative providers that the school uses.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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' interest first.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtime. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents through Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Farrimond

Ofsted Inspector

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