

Inspection of St Columba's Catholic Primary School

Hillside Road, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside L36 8BL

Inspection dates:	12 and 13 November 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a very happy school. Pupils thrive in a safe oasis of calm, away from their busy lives outside of school. They have the time to laugh, sing and make friends. Pupils say that this is a school where staff listen to them. Pupils enjoy gaining new knowledge. They rise to the school's high expectations for their education and achieve well.

Pupils are very cooperative with staff and one another. They learn to be considerate, such as through 'kindness week'. In lessons, and when elsewhere around the school, pupils are self-disciplined and self-aware.

Pupils benefit from an excellent range of opportunities that develop their personal skills. For instance, the school provides pupils with a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. Pupils hold an array of different roles to help the school, such as acting as librarians. The school helps pupils to gain many new skills, such as in gardening and first aid. From Nursery to Year 6, the school supports pupils' feelings and emotions very successfully, helping pupils to be ready to learn the curriculum.

Pupils learn to respect other people's experiences, ideas and opinions. They gain a rich knowledge of important topics such as crime, equality and careers. The school prepares pupils exceptionally well to be responsible, respectful British citizens.

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

The school has established an ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum. It identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. It makes sure that all its pupils have an equal chance to succeed. The school ensures that staff choose activities carefully when deciding how to teach the curriculum. Where pupils, such as those with SEND, need extra individual support, the school is quick to provide the help that pupils need. As a result, many pupils overcome considerable obstacles to their learning. Pupils blossom academically, socially and emotionally.

Much of the time, the school checks effectively on pupils' knowledge. It then helps them to learn essential information well. However, on occasion, the school does not make certain that pupils can recall some essential knowledge that they have been taught previously. This means that, sometimes, pupils' new knowledge does not build on a secure understanding.

The published data for reading in Year 6 in 2024 was well below the national average. This arose because the school had not resolved some gaps in pupils' learning that developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The published data does not reflect the quality of education that current pupils benefit from in reading in the early years and in key stages 1 and 2. The school has developed staff expertise skilfully to teach pupils to read and to check what pupils know. As a result, pupils at the school are becoming fluent, enthusiastic readers. Pupils say that the school inspires them so much through its use of stories that they keenly write stories for themselves at home.

The school's work in the early years builds on its well-considered links with other settings and parents and carers. This helps children, who are new to the school, to settle well and for staff to understand their needs. Staff make the curriculum memorable and meaningful. Children flourish as they gain the confidence, knowledge and skills that they need for their future learning.

Pupils are thoughtful and sensible. They follow the school's rules. Pupils focus on their work with little distraction.

The school has strengthened its work to improve pupils' attendance. For example, leaders and governors use information about patterns of absences to carefully decide the school's actions. The school provides parents with effective support and advice about the importance of high attendance. Pupils' attendance at the school is improving, but too many still miss days at school.

The school aims high for its pupils. It identifies the gaps in pupils' personal development very carefully. The school matches its provision to pupils' needs precisely. It exposes pupils to a rich programme of additional learning. For instance, some key stage 2 classes recently worked with an external specialist to explore healthy food, using a Greek menu as an example. The school prepares pupils very well for their future lives.

The school carefully considers the workload of its staff when making decisions. It also provides them with well-thought-out training and guidance. This support enables staff to teach the school's subject curriculums effectively. The governing body has a wide range of skills and expertise. It challenges and supports the work of the school well. It keeps a close eye on the school's work, such as to include and support pupils with SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the school does not make sure that pupils remember essential information from their previous learning. This means that some of pupils' learning of new knowledge is less secure than it should be. The school should make certain that it helps pupils to keep essential information in their long-term memory.
- Some pupils do not attend school when they should. This has a negative effect on their learning. The school should build on its recently strengthened work with parents so that all pupils have good attendance.

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	104480
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10347884
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Boardman
Headteacher	Kathryn Edwards
Website	stcolumbasknowsley.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision for its pupils.
- Several staff, including the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, are new since the previous inspection.
- This is a Catholic primary school in the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in June 2019. The next section 48 inspection is expected to take place in the 2025 to 2026 school year.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- The inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors made visits to lessons. An inspector listened to some pupils read to staff.
- Inspectors also considered information about some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with the school about special educational needs, early years, behaviour and attendance and its provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, including pupils with SEND. Inspectors also spoke with pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes and as they moved around the school. They considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents and considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their work at the school. The inspectors reviewed the responses from staff to Ofsted's survey.
- The lead inspector met with the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- An inspector met with early career teachers.
- 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' interests first.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Hulse

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024