

Inspection of St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Wigan

Holmes House Avenue, Winstanley, Wigan, Lancashire WN3 6EE

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

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since January 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this happy, aspirational school where everyone wants the best for them. Pupils' positive experiences are reflected in their eager smiles and the enthusiasm they show for learning.

Pupils forge strong relationships with the staff and with each other. They are encouraged to talk about any of their worries. Pupils are offered the support they need to flourish. This helps them to feel safe and secure.

Pupils are keen to reach the school's high expectations of them. Their behaviour around school and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve highly in many subjects. This means they take the next step of their education with confidence.

Pupils are well mannered, friendly and articulate. They appreciate the sports clubs they can attend and value enrichment experiences such as trips to theatres, zoos and museums. Pupils carry out a range of special responsibilities. They are mutually supportive of each other and proud to make an active contribution to the success of their school. Pupils' desire to make a positive difference extends to the local community through their committed support of charities such as food banks.

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

The school's curriculum is broad, stimulating and ambitious for pupils, including pupils with SEND. The curriculum has been reviewed recently to take into account pupils' routes through the school as part of several mixed-age classes. The school ensures that all aspects of the national curriculum are covered without unnecessary repetition.

The important curriculum content, including subject-specific vocabulary, pupils need to learn has been identified. This content is ordered carefully so pupils can build on previous learning when presented with new ideas. Consequently, pupils can progress through the curriculum with confidence, knowing more and remembering more over time. They gain a rich body of knowledge in many subjects. However, throughout the school, some pupils cannot form letters accurately or write legibly. This hampers their confidence and fluency when writing.

In most subjects, teachers receive expert guidance and helpful information about how to deliver the curriculum effectively. The school's particular focus on developing vocabulary supports pupils' memory of prior learning. Teachers generally check pupils' understanding carefully and address any misconceptions swiftly. However, there are times when the independent activities selected by the school do not move pupils' learning forward. This sometimes hinders pupils' achievement.

In the early years, children's communication, language and spoken vocabulary are given high priority. As soon as they start in the Reception class, children quickly learn to recognise sounds and their corresponding letters.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Staff are well trained in teaching phonics, and they deliver the structured programme consistently well. Pupils who struggle to keep pace with the programme are given targeted help by highly skilled staff. Pupils catch up quickly. As a result, almost all pupils become confident and accurate readers before the end of Year 2.

As pupils progress through the school, they learn to read a carefully balanced range of poetry, fiction and non-fiction texts with increasing fluency and comprehension. They become enthusiastic readers who are eager to talk about their favourite books and authors. Pupils' strong proficiency in reading contributes greatly to their achievement in other subjects.

The additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified early and accurately. Teachers use an increasing range of strategies to ensure that these pupils learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers and achieve well. Pupils with more complex needs benefit from high-quality personalised support in the school's tailored provisions 'The Nest' and 'Branches'.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. The tone is set in the early years where children learn to share and play happily with their friends. They quickly respond to the clear routines and concentrate well on activities. These firm foundations of positive learning behaviour are built on throughout the school. Classrooms and playgrounds are harmonious places to be. Pupils behave exceptionally well, which means everyone can learn free from distractions.

The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the wider world. Pupils adopt a mature and thoughtful approach to discussions on important themes such as democracy and equality. Pupils demonstrate empathy for others and understand that everyone should be treated with respect. They are well prepared for their future lives.

Governors bring wide-ranging expertise and considerable experience to their roles. Staff value leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being. Parents and carers are resoundingly positive about the school and convey appreciation for all the staff do to support their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, the learning activities selected by the school lack a clear purpose. They do not help pupils to learn all that they can. This can sometimes hinder pupils' achievement. The school should ensure teachers receive the support and guidance

they need to design effective subject-specific approaches and activities.

- The school's expectations for pupils' handwriting are not high enough. Some pupils have not mastered legible and accurate letter formation by the time they leave Year 6. This hinders their writing fluency, communication and confidence. The school should clarify expectations for the development of pupils' handwriting skills and ensure pupils develop sufficient fluency and stamina in their independent writing across the curriculum.

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	106463
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10348034
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	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Leake
Headteacher	Joanne Farrimond
Website	www.saintaidansprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 January 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Its most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was in in May 2023.
- The headteacher was appointed in 2015.
- The leadership structure has been reviewed. The deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings 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. She also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and during lessons. They spoke with pupils to discuss their views of the school, their learning, their behaviour and their safety. Inspectors also reviewed documentation about pupils' attendance, safety and behaviour.
- The lead inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed samples of documentation relating to SEND.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science, art and design and history. For each deep dive, inspectors reviewed curriculum documentation and discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also reviewed aspects of several other subjects in the school's curriculum.
- The lead inspector considered the views of parents through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also took account of staff's views through the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents shared by school leaders, including the school improvement plan, leaders' self-evaluation document and the minutes taken at governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Moira Loftus	Ofsted Inspector
Sandra Hamilton	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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