

Inspection of St Francis Xavier School - a Joint Catholic and Church of England Voluntary Academy

Darlington Road, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL10 7DA

Inspection dates:	12 and 13 November 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Jacqueline Prime. This school is part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic 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), Hugh Hegarty, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joseph Hughes.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Francis Xavier School - a Joint Catholic and Church of England Voluntary Academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Francis Xavier School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as St Francis Xavier School - a Joint Catholic and Church of England Voluntary Academy as a result of conversion to academy status. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at the school benefit considerably from the education and wider experiences that they receive. Academically, pupils achieve exceptionally well, meeting the school's extremely high expectations. The school also supports them to develop as young people. Pupils are mature. They understand and respect difference in the world. This is reflected in the confident way that they discuss other cultures or the protected characteristics, such as gender or race.

The school has extremely high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils' conduct is consistently excellent. Disruption to learning is very rare. Pupils interact well with adults and one another. Pupils understand their role in creating a positive environment in which everyone can succeed. Pupils' successes, both at school and in the community, are routinely celebrated.

The school's extensive enrichment programme provides opportunities that align with its values. All pupils experience educational visits, for many including overseas. For example, some pupils who study geography have visited Iceland and learned about glaciers and other natural features. Other pupils are raising funds to visit Kenya, where they will help with renovation work at a local school.

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

Pupils achieve exceptionally well across the curriculum. This is reflected in published outcomes from national examinations. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the same rich curriculum as their peers. They achieve equally impressive academic outcomes. These outcomes and the strong careers advice and guidance that the school provides prepare pupils well for their next steps in education, employment or training.

The school's culture is designed around its gospel values. These are reflected in the interactions of all members of the school community. Pupils are considerate of others. In lessons, they listen attentively and value the contributions of peers. Pupils recognise the importance of working hard. Their attitudes towards learning are consistently positive. This contributes to the studious atmosphere in lessons.

Knowledgeable staff are experts in the subjects that they teach and how to teach them. They regularly check on what pupils know, using the information that they gather to adapt the support that they provide to pupils. As a result, pupils develop a strong understanding of the subjects that they study.

Pupils who need additional support are quickly identified by the school. The school assesses pupils' reading proficiency regularly. Trained staff provide additional help that enables pupils to catch up. The needs of pupils with SEND are understood by staff. Teachers adjust their teaching well to ensure that these pupils benefit fully from the school's ambitious curriculum.

Pupils attend school regularly. Rates of absence are very low. The school analyses patterns of attendance carefully to understand any reasons that pupils are absent from school. When pupils struggle with regular attendance, the school provides effective support to help them to attend more often.

The school provides pupils with a breadth of opportunities that enrich their education. Many of these align with the school's values. Pupils take on roles that embody the school's value of service. For example, many older pupils act as mentors for younger peers. Others have been involved in charitable and social action projects, such as by joining a march against poverty. Pupils explained the importance of these leadership roles, telling inspectors that it helps them to 'take care of other people and yourself'. The school prepares pupils well to be positive members of society.

Those with responsibility for governance know the school well. They make regular checks on the effectiveness of the school's work. They use what they know to provide effective support and challenge to the school.

The vast majority of pupils, as well as parents and carers, express very positive views of the school. They recognise the high-quality education that pupils receive. Staff are highly committed to the school and its pupils. They are consulted by the school on issues that affect their roles. They value the supportive approach of leaders in the school and the wider trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	147213
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10323106
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	608
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joseph Hughes
CEO of the trust	Hugh Hegarty
Headteacher	Jacqueline Prime
Website	www.sfxschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher began in her current role in January 2024.
- The school is part of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust. It joined the trust in September 2022.
- The school has a joint Roman Catholic and Church of England religious character. It is part of both the Diocese of Middlesborough and the Diocese of Leeds. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in May 2018. The next is due to take place within eight years of this date.
- The school does not use any alternative provisions.
- 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

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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 members of the trust board, the local governing board and the trust's CEO.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher. They also met with other senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, design and technology and modern foreign languages. 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 reviewed samples of pupils' work from other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation regarding the support that pupils with SEND receive. They looked at the quality of the provision for pupils with SEND in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes from governing board meetings as well as the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour. They observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and at social times.
- The views of pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's surveys were considered.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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