

Inspection of St Francis de Sales Catholic Infant and Nursery School

Margaret Road, Walton, Liverpool, Merseyside L4 3RX

Inspection dates:	5 and 6 November 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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 November 2014.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to school. Staff greet them every day with a friendly morning welcome. Pupils learn and play happily with friends from many different cultures. They understand that everyone is treated equally. Pupils feel safe in school. They know that the staff understand them and their families and that they always have their best interests at heart.

Right from when they start school in the early years, children understand that the school has high aspirations for their learning. They rise to these expectations and are supported to do their very best in lessons. Typically, pupils achieve well.

Pupils are kind to each other. They are respectful and welcoming towards visitors. The school environment is calm and nurturing. Playtimes are positive times where pupils have fun.

Many pupils enjoy attending extra-curricular clubs, such as football and choir. They gain new experiences through going on a wide range of trips and visits. Some pupils take positions of responsibility, for example, representing their class on the school council. Pupils also learn about being active citizens through activities such as visiting a local home for older people, litter picking and raising money for charities.

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. Learning is carefully ordered so that pupils build their knowledge well over time. In the majority of subjects, the detailed knowledge that the school wants pupils to know is clearly identified. In these subjects, pupils demonstrate secure learning. In other subjects, where this knowledge is less well defined, pupils' learning is not as strong. Teachers use a range of effective strategies to check pupils' learning and address misconceptions within lessons.

The school supports several other schools to develop their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) practice. Additionally, it works closely with parents and carers before children begin school in the Nursery Year to make sure that any SEND are identified as soon as possible. This enables the school to put appropriate provision in place right from the start. The school trains staff well to support pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers. This means that pupils with SEND progress well through the curriculum.

The school makes developing children's speaking and listening skills an absolute priority in the early years. Speech and language support is in place from Nursery through to Year 1. In nursery, the pupils are immersed in stories and reading to support them to develop early reading skills. As they move into Reception, children are taught phonics using the school's chosen programme by well-trained, skilful staff. Typically, pupils are successful in meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. However, this was not the case in 2024. The school is well aware of the reasons for this dip and has taken suitable action to remedy the situation. The school now swiftly identifies pupils who are

finding reading difficult. These pupils have a structured programme of support in place from Reception to help them to catch up. Even so, a few pupils at the earliest stages of reading still find it difficult to blend the sounds that they have learned.

Pupils behave well. In the early years, children quickly learn the rules and routines and start to develop self-regulation. On a few occasions, some pupils show a lack of engagement within lessons. However, staff are well trained to re-engage pupils with learning to minimise any further disruption.

The school prioritises and expects high levels of attendance and punctuality. It supports and challenges families to achieve this. This means that the vast majority of pupils benefit from being in school regularly and on time.

The school has considered the needs of its pupils when creating its personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. It has a keen focus on teaching pupils about the different types of relationships and what makes a relationship positive. Pupils have a strong age-related understanding of fundamental British values such as democracy. For example, they can talk about voting and how it is fair for everyone.

The school very much values the multicultural nature of its community and extends a warm welcome to all its families. It has developed strong, positive relationships with parents and carers, for example by inviting them to 'stay and play' days and providing phonics and reading workshops.

Staff feel that the school makes every effort to support their well-being. It helps them to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Teachers appreciate being given time to carry out their roles and the changes that have been made to policies to support their workload.

Governors have a strong oversight of the school. They are well informed about its strengths and areas for development. This enables them to support and challenge leaders as appropriate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn has not been identified precisely enough. In these subjects, teachers are sometimes unclear about what pupils should learn. This means that some pupils develop gaps in their learning and do not build their understanding securely. The school should ensure that the key curriculum content is identified in these subjects so that pupils are well supported to know more and remember more.

- The support provided for pupils who are finding learning to read difficult does not focus sufficiently on strengthening pupils' knowledge of how to blend sounds together. This means that these pupils struggle to develop fluent reading skills. The school should ensure that all pupils are given well-planned opportunities to focus on blending the sounds that they know into words. This will enable them to swiftly make progress through the phonics curriculum and become fluent, confident readers.

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	104651
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10347895
Type of school	Nursery/Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lindsey Edwards
Headteacher	Lisa Melia
Website	www.stfrancisdesalesinfants.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 November 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides a breakfast club.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic school within the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection took place in February 2020. The next inspection will be within five years.

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.
- During this inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher and a wide range of other staff.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, physical education and science. 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.
- 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 inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and while in lessons.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- The inspectors also spoke to subject leaders and pupils and viewed examples of pupils' work in a range of other subjects.
- The lead inspector observed pupils in Years 1 and 2 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- The inspectors reviewed key documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school action plans and monitoring records.

Inspection team

Liz Davidson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Swift	Ofsted Inspector
Nicky Parkinson	Ofsted Inspector

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