

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Coventry Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9BZ

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2025

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Bernadette Dabbs. This school is part of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Neil Lockyer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Noon.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy is a warm, welcoming and vibrant learning community. At the start of the school day, pupils arrive with smiles on their faces. Staff greet them at their classroom doors cheerfully. This positive and happy atmosphere continues throughout the day.

The school has high expectations for all pupils. Pupils rise to the academic and personal challenges that are set for them. They are keen to learn and achieve well. They leave the school with the knowledge they need to progress to the next stage in their education. Pupils also develop essential life skills that stand them in good stead for life in modern Britain.

Pupils are impressive advocates for the school. Right from their early days in school, they learn the importance of behaving well and keeping the school's three promises to, 'be kind, work hard and make the right choice'. When needed, they are supported effectively to reflect on their actions, if they break a promise, and find a way to restore the situation.

Parents are highly positive about the work of the school. One parent summed up the school's many successes by saying, 'the school provides a high standard of education and teaches children to be good, well rounded, loving individuals.'

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

The school has established a broad and ambitious curriculum. From the early years to Year 6, the school identifies the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Typically, staff deliver the curriculum with skill. They explain new concepts and model learning clearly. They support pupils as they practise and apply this new learning in their work. Staff step in promptly when pupils need more help. Pupils' knowledge builds up incrementally over time. For example, children in the early years secure a strong understanding of number. By Year 6, pupils convert percentages to decimals and fractions confidently. Occasionally, the learning tasks that teachers provide do not help pupils to grasp the intended learning successfully.

The school has effective systems in place to identify the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff adapt lessons and provide additional resources for pupils with SEND. This means that they can learn the same curriculum as their peers with success.

Pupils have plenty of targeted opportunities to develop their language skills. They explain their learning to their peers when they are asked to, 'be the teacher'. This important work begins in the early years. Children are introduced routinely to ambitious vocabulary. They use actions to help them understand and remember the meaning of 'frolic', 'shrewd' and 'grumble' as they read class texts, such as 'A Squash and a Squeeze'. They complete well-conceived drawing activities to support the development of their early writing skills. Staff model accurate letter formation as children are introduced to each new letter. However, staff do not address the mistakes that pupils make as they form these letters in their own writing consistently.

The school helps pupils to learn to read as quickly as possible. Staff deliver the phonics programme with confidence. They provide effective support when pupils are at risk of falling behind their peers. Pupils become fluent and confident readers. The school promotes a love of reading well. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of high-quality texts. Pupils enjoy experiencing the magic of picking up a book through visits from 'mystery readers' and trips to the local library and bookshops.

The school's personal development offer is second to none. Exceptional care has been taken to map out the many rich experiences the school expects pupils to have. For example, pupils benefit from visiting zoos, the Houses of Parliament and staying in retreats. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that every pupil finds a personal talent or interest. Pupils develop social skills effectively, sharing in others' achievements, such as celebrating opportunities to perform at locally important events. Pupils learn the importance of community spirit. They have valuable and meaningful experiences to develop leadership skills. The school's recent work on 'smartphone free childhoods' was instigated by pupil voice.

The school engages effectively with its staff, reflected in their unanimous pride in working at St Joseph's. Leaders take effective action to reduce staff workload, which they

appreciate greatly. The school has established a family ethos where staff look out for one another.

The trust provides effective support for the school. Governors are skilled. They hold leaders to account effectively. The school's vision that pupils will, 'believe, achieve, succeed' is the driving force for each decision the school takes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not correct consistently the errors that pupils make as they form letters in the early stages of learning to write. As a result, pupils continue to make mistakes. They do not develop accurate letter formation as quickly as they could. The school should ensure that staff support pupils to master accurate letter formation right from the start of their time in school.
- Sometimes, staff do not provide pupils with well-designed learning activities. When this happens, pupils struggle to acquire the intended learning. The school should ensure that staff provide pupils with tasks that support them to secure the knowledge they need consistently before moving on to new learning.

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 December 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 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	138080
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10371745
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
CEO of the trust	Neil Lockyer
Headteacher	Bernadette Dabbs
Website	www.stjosephs.leics.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 December 2019 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- This is a Catholic faith school in the Diocese of Nottingham. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2024. The next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher. She also met with curriculum leaders, the leaders for the early years and special educational needs and a group of staff.
- The inspector held meetings with the chair of governors and the chair of the board of trustees. She held a further meeting with representatives of the trust, including the CEO.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Additionally, she spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the results of the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Caroline Poole, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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