Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy

Beacon Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 2BG

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 March 2025

Outcome

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Lucy Gunton. This school is part of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi 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), Neil Lockyer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Noon.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this warm and welcoming school. They take huge pride in their own and their friends' successes. Pupils know that staff value these achievements as much as they do themselves. This helps secure a culture that is rich with a sense of togetherness and belonging.

The school's values weave through every aspect of school life. Staff routinely model these values. This helps pupils to achieve the high standards of behaviour the school expects. Pupils place high regard on the importance and acceptance of individuality. They are tolerant and respectful of each other and they grow into young people who want to make a positive contribution to their community.

Pupils rise to the challenge of high academic expectation set by their teachers. Pupils apply themselves determinedly to achieve these aspirational goals. They are attentive in class. They produce written work that is of high quality and reflects the depth of their understanding.

Pupils take on responsibility enthusiastically. These pupils are role models for others. They take their responsibilities seriously and are proud of the contribution they make. Peer mentors help resolve feelings of upset in a sensitive way. Pupil librarians encourage pupils to read more and value books and stories.

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

The school has addressed the issues highlighted in the previous inspection. The ambitious curriculum now sets out the precise order staff should teach important knowledge. This helps pupils use what they already know to secure new learning. The school has ensured that staff have the necessary subject and pedagogical knowledge. Consequently, explanations of new content are clear and precise. Learning activities help pupils practise and secure new knowledge. In the early years, children access this through well-considered play activities. However, occasionally, checks to test pupils' understanding do not identify when some are ready to move on to the next stage of learning. Some pupils have unnoticed gaps in their knowledge and find it difficult to complete tasks. Other pupils who have secured the required understanding repeat simple low-level activity. These pupils do not always achieve learning in the depth they could.

Pupils are avid readers. They enjoy the stories they read in class. They make links from these stories to learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 link the displacement of people in the Second World War to the migration poetry they study. These links help pupils to develop a rich understanding of the subjects they study. The love of reading starts at the very beginning of the early years. Children learn quickly the sounds letters make. Carefully chosen books help them practise these sounds. Pupils struggling to keep up are identified quickly and supported. Pupils become confident, fluent readers.

The school has increased the rigour of how it identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It now identifies pupils' needs rapidly. However, some of the information provided to staff lacks detail. Individual needs and support strategies are not clearly defined. The school has ensured that staff have the knowledge they need to best support these pupils. As a result, most of the adaptations teachers make to their approaches ensure that pupils with SEND learn well. However, in some cases, staff have not had enough time to embed their knowledge into their practice. Here, adaptations lack an element of precision and are not always as effective. This means that some pupils with SEND do not always learn as well as they could.

Pupils are well behaved. Learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and are keen to receive the rewards issued for their achievements. Around school, pupils are considerate of each other and their environment. Children in the early years learn quickly how to meet the high expectations set for their conduct. This leads to a calm and purposeful environment around the school.

The school's personal, social and health education programme is well planned. Pupils have a deep understanding of important topics, such as tolerance, democracy and respect. Pupils know the importance of maintaining healthy minds, bodies and relationships. Younger children know it is important to share and be kind. As they get older, pupils understand the importance of maintaining strong bonds of friendship and family. Pupils are well prepared for the transition to secondary school and their roles within their wider community.

The school and trust have a secure vision for the school. Staff share this vision and the determination to provide the highest quality provision for all pupils. School leaders are well supported by trustees, yet at the same time held to a high degree of accountability. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel valued. The trust ensures that decisions are always made in the best interests of pupils. Trustees make sure that actions to improve are carefully planned to maintain a happy and engaged workforce.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The checks made on pupils' understanding, and how staff use this information, lack a degree of accuracy. As a result, pupils are not always moved on to the next stage of learning when they are ready. This results in some pupils not learning the curriculum in the depth intended. The school and trust should ensure that staff have the expertise to accurately check what pupils know and use this information to move pupils on when they are ready.
- Sometimes, the adaptations made for pupils with SEND lack the precision needed to help them keep up with the curriculum. As a result, some strategies lack the intended impact and some pupils with SEND do not learn as deeply and securely as the school expects. The school and trust should ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to identify precisely pupils' individual barriers to learning and develop and implement strategies to help them learn the curriculum as intended.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2016.

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	138294
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10371746
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	200
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
CEO of the trust	Neil Lockyer
Headteacher	Lucy Gunton
Website	www.sacredheartacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up her position in October 2024.
- The school does not use any provider of alternative provision.
- The school provides wraparound provision. This is managed by the school.

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 his evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher. The inspector also met with representatives of the trust board and the trust's executive team, including the chief executive officer.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. He also looked at documentation about the curriculum and reviewed documentation for pupils with SEND.
- 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 considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments submitted. He considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. The inspector also spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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