Sacred Heart Catholic School

Address: Earlsbury Gardens, Birchfield, Birmingham, West Midlands, B20 3AE

Unique reference number (URN): 147109

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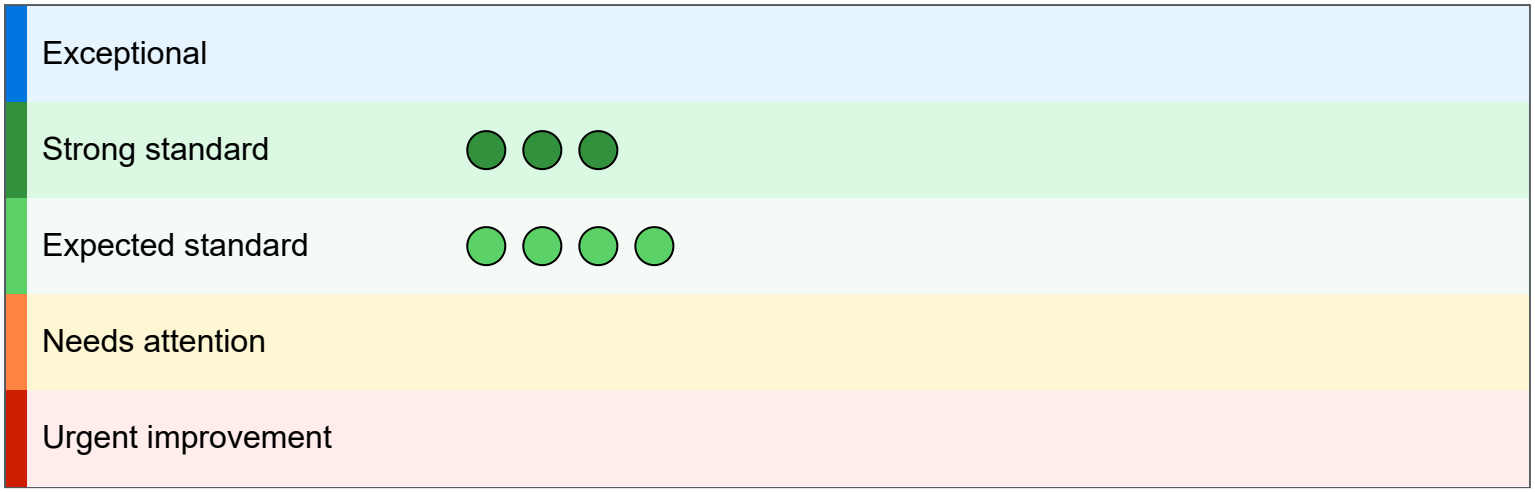

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders place a strong and sustained focus on attendance. Robust systems enable leaders to monitor patterns closely and identify concerns swiftly. As a result of leaders' actions, pupils’ attendance has improved over time. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attend school very well. Persistent absence has decreased and continues to fall. Where pupils face barriers to regular attendance, leaders intervene early and work effectively with families to secure improvement, including tailored pastoral support and clear communication about the importance of attending school every day.

Leaders have established high expectations for behaviour and attitudes to learning. These expectations are modelled consistently by staff, who understand and apply the school’s behaviour policies. Clear routines are embedded across the school day, enabling pupils to move calmly between lessons and settle quickly to learning. As a result, classrooms are orderly, purposeful environments where pupils are attentive, motivated and eager to do well.

Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and supportive. Pupils feel safe and know that staff will address concerns swiftly. Bullying, including discriminatory behaviour, is rare and not tolerated. Incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Where pupils, including those with SEND, need additional help to manage their emotions or behaviour, staff provide timely support. Consequently, pupils behave well, show consideration for others and demonstrate positive attitudes that enable learning to flourish.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders provide clear, purposeful direction for the school, underpinned by a strong moral commitment to serving the community. They know the school well and use a range of evidence to identify strengths and priorities accurately. Decisions place pupils’ learning, safety and wellbeing at the centre. Leaders act decisively to secure improvement and maintain high expectations for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The curriculum is thoughtfully designed and reviewed to meet pupils’ needs and prepare them for the next stage of education. Teaching is supported through a well-planned programme of professional development. Staff benefit from high-quality training, coaching and opportunities to collaborate. Early career teachers are supported effectively. Leaders consider workload and wellbeing, adapting systems, so staff can work efficiently and confidently. As a result, morale is high, and staff feel valued and trusted.

Those responsible for governance know the school well and fulfil their statutory duties rigorously. Governors and trust members provide appropriate support and challenge, holding leaders to account. They have a secure understanding of safeguarding, inclusion and curriculum quality. Resources, including additional funding, are monitored carefully to ensure that they are used in pupils’ best interests.

Strong partnerships enhance the school’s work further. Leaders work effectively with parents, external professionals and other schools to strengthen provision and remove barriers to learning. This collaborative approach sustains a positive culture of ambition, care and continual improvement. As a result, pupils and staff benefit from the school’s work.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The school places pupils’ personal development at the centre of its work. Leaders have established a carefully planned and ambitious programme that reflects the context of the school and pupils' needs. Pupils speak proudly of the knowledge and skills they have been taught so that they can thrive both in school and beyond. They speak positively about the wide range of experiences available, including trips, visiting speakers and a variety of free after-school clubs that build their confidence and broaden their horizons.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education is carefully structured and adapted in response to pupils’ evolving needs. Pupils learn about important themes such as healthy relationships, mental wellbeing and online and real-world safety. For example, older pupils explain the benefits of artificial intelligence in solving problems quickly while recognising its environmental impact.

Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of fundamental British values. Leaders make deliberate links with school values. Pupils talk confidently about democracy and citizens' rights protected under the law. They understand the importance of equality and inclusion. Pupils reflect on their beliefs and experiences and consider ethical issues, developing a clear understanding of right and wrong.

Leaders provide a wide range of leadership opportunities, such as worship leaders, classroom monitors and reading ambassadors. These roles enable pupils to develop responsibility and teamwork. Pupils have extensive opportunities to represent the school in external events. For example, pupils play the steel pans at several musical concerts. These experiences help pupils develop resilience and a strong sense of belonging.

Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, can access the full range of opportunities. Barriers to participation are identified and addressed. Pastoral support is effective. Pupils learn strategies to manage their emotions, including breathing techniques to help them calm and focus. As a result, pupils leave the school as respectful and well-rounded individuals prepared for life in modern Britain.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils generally achieve well as they move through the school. Most develop secure knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics, enabling them to access learning across the wider curriculum. Pupils build on prior learning effectively and can recall key knowledge over

time. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who make steady progress from their starting points.

For the last 3 years, published test data is broadly in line with national averages, apart from in phonics and mathematics. However, pupils' previous attainment does not reflect how well current pupils at the school achieve. In mathematics, pupils are achieving better as leaders have addressed previous weaknesses with appropriate urgency. Phonics teaching supports pupils to read accurately, and those who need additional help catch up quickly through targeted support. In the early years, children develop important foundations in communication, early reading and number. As a result, most are ready for the demands of Year 1.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum. They have an accurate understanding of its quality. They have identified the essential knowledge and skills that pupils should learn from the early years through to the end of Year 6. This ensures that learning builds in a logical sequence over time. Teaching is typically effective, and staff present new learning clearly. As a result, most pupils develop a secure understanding of key concepts across subjects.

Leaders prioritise essential skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Effective phonics teaching enables pupils to develop fluency and confidence in reading. Pupils who fall behind receive timely, targeted support to help them catch up. In mathematics, pupils practise key number facts regularly and apply their knowledge to solve problems. However, in some subjects, teachers do not consistently plan learning that is closely matched to intended curriculum outcomes. As a result, some pupils lack opportunities to apply their knowledge and tackle complex tasks.

Teachers usually adapt learning effectively to meet the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They typically check pupils' understanding and provide additional support where needed. There is a clear focus on improving writing across the school. Pupils write for a range of purposes. However, some resource choices limit how much pupils write. As a result, some pupils do not apply their writing skills as effectively or deeply as they could. Leaders are taking appropriate steps to address this and strengthen the curriculum further.

Early years

Expected standard

Children settle quickly into the early years because staff create a calm and welcoming environment. Staff use their knowledge of children's starting points to adapt learning effectively. Positive relationships support children to feel safe and confident. Clear routines help children understand expectations and develop independence. As a result, children are ready to learn and take part enthusiastically in activities.

Leaders have designed a well-sequenced curriculum that builds children's knowledge over time across all areas of learning. There is a strong emphasis on communication and language. Staff model vocabulary carefully and engage children in meaningful conversations. For example, during group story sessions, staff encourage children to explain

their ideas using new vocabulary. This helps children to develop their speaking and listening skills. During adult-led activities, interactions are purposeful and extend children's thinking. At times, opportunities during independent play could be used more consistently to deepen learning further.

Reading is prioritised from the start of Reception. Staff teach phonics systematically and check children's understanding regularly. Children practise applying their knowledge in reading and writing with increasing confidence. Staff identify those who need extra support and provide timely interventions. They work closely with parents to share information and support children's learning at home. Consequently, most children develop the early reading skills they need and are prepared for the transition into Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders place a robust emphasis on understanding each pupil as an individual. They identify pupils' needs swiftly and use a range of information to recognise any barriers that may affect learning or wellbeing. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to children's social care. Leaders work closely with families and external professionals to ensure that support is well informed and responsive. As a result, pupils receive timely help that enables them to feel secure and ready to learn.

Staff benefit from regular training that develops their confidence in adapting teaching. They use a range of strategies, such as visual supports, practical resources and carefully structured routines, to ensure that learning is accessible and ambitious for all pupils. These approaches help pupils to engage positively in lessons and build independence over time. Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and review the effectiveness of support. Where provision is not having the intended impact, they take prompt action to refine their approach.

Additional funding, including the pupil premium, is used thoughtfully to reduce barriers and enhance pupils' experiences. Consequently, most pupils access the full curriculum and are supported to achieve well from their starting points.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to attend this friendly and inclusive school. They arrive ready to learn and are greeted warmly by staff who know them well. This helps pupils to feel safe, valued and part of a close-knit community. Across the school, there is a strong sense of belonging. Pupils describe their school as a place where everyone is welcomed and supported to do their best. Relationships between pupils and staff are highly positive and built on mutual respect.

Pupils enjoy their learning and show enthusiasm in lessons. They listen carefully, contribute thoughtfully and take pride in their work. Leaders have designed a curriculum that interests pupils and helps them build knowledge over time. Pupils remember important content and talk confidently about what they have learned using the right vocabulary across subjects. Those who join the school speaking English as an additional language, with special

educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or significant personal challenges make meaningful progress.

Behaviour across the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils understand expectations and follow routines well in lessons and at social times. They are polite, kind and considerate. Pupils say that bullying is rare and are confident that staff will deal with concerns quickly and effectively. Attendance continues to improve through strong partnerships with parents and carers.

Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils. They identify those who need extra support and put this in place promptly, including pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. As a result, most pupils achieve well and are prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils value the range of opportunities beyond the classroom. They enjoy clubs, trips and leadership roles, such as school councillors and playground leaders. Pupils attend a wide selection of after-school clubs. These experiences help pupils develop confidence, responsibility and an understanding of their role within the community. Pupils feel that they belong, achieve and thrive, which prepares them effectively for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently adjust learning tasks, so pupils build knowledge securely, develop deep understanding across subjects and achieve highly over time.
- Leaders should ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their writing knowledge to produce consistently high-quality work across the curriculum.

About this inspection

This school is part of St John Paul II Catholic Multi-Academy Company, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Teresa Cotter, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Maria Perkins.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders including the executive principal, head of school, assistant principal and other leaders. The lead inspector spoke with the chief executive office, representatives of the trust, including chair of the trust board, representatives of the local governing body and an adviser from the Diocese during the inspection.

Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, at social times and met with groups of pupils.

Inspectors met with groups of staff and spoke to parents at the end of the school day. They considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The Head of School is Dawn Cooper.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's last section 48 inspection was in November 2022.

The school runs a breakfast club managed by the school.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Executive Principal: Natalie Brodie

Lead inspector:
James Dean, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Christian Hamilton, Ofsted Inspector
Darren Lennon, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 16 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

184
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

50.54%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.54%
Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

23.91%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	54%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	58%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	53%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	52%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	79%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	72%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	66%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	63%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	73%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	52%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	47%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	53%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	73%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	64%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	56%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	53%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	68%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	47%	69%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	53%	67%	-14 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	69%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	73%	81%	-7 pp
2023/24 (final)	60%	80%	-20 pp
2022/23 (final)	73%	78%	-6 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	67%	78%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	67%	78%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	73%	78%	-4 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	64%	77%	-14 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	56%	80%	-24 pp
2024/25 (final)	53%	81%	-27 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	5.0%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.1%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.5%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	14.1%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	21.5%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	17.0%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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