

Inspection of a good school: St Paul's Catholic School, a Voluntary Academy

Spencefield Lane, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 6HN

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

St Paul's Catholic School, a Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong family atmosphere in this inclusive school. Staff say everyone looks out for one another. Pupils have trusted adults they can turn to when they need help. Staff care about pupils' well-being. Pupils feel happy and safe at school. Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They behave well. There is very little bullying. Staff deal swiftly with occasional bullying incidents.

Leaders have high expectations of every pupil. Pupils respond well to leaders' high standards. Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards their learning. They achieve well. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is also challenging for all, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils can choose from a wide variety of subjects at key stage 4 and in the sixth form.

Leaders ensure that there are opportunities for pupils to develop their character, including their potential as leaders. They also make sure that all pupils develop spiritually and morally. Some pupils benefit from extra-curricular opportunities in sport, including football and netball. Pupils also have the chance to take part in school productions. However, not all pupils take advantage of these opportunities. Some pupils would appreciate a wider range of extra-curricular activities.

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

Leaders provide pupils with a high-quality education. They have designed the curriculum to meet a wide range of pupils' needs. They make sure that pupils follow an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum. Subject curriculums identify the precise knowledge pupils need to learn at each stage. This ensures that pupils build up their knowledge in a logical way. This helps pupils to achieve well.

The proportion of pupils at key stage 4 who study all of the English Baccalaureate subjects is below the national average. In order to address this, leaders have taken action to increase the number of pupils who study a foreign language at key stage 4.

Teachers use strategies which help pupils to learn the planned curriculum. Teachers are experts in their fields, who are passionate about the subjects they teach. Teaching is particularly effective in the sixth form.

There is a whole-school approach to reading. During form time, everybody reads. Pupils take part enthusiastically in these sessions. Pupils who struggle with reading when they join the school receive extra help from trained staff. As a result, many of these pupils now read fluently.

Leaders have introduced an approach for checking pupils' understanding. Many teachers use this approach effectively to quickly identify pupils' errors and correct them, so pupils can develop their knowledge over time. A minority of teachers are not yet checking pupils' understanding consistently enough before moving learning on.

The school's careers education programme helps pupils and students make good choices about their options at the end of key stages 4 and 5. Students leave the sixth form and take up places at university and in the world of work. They have developed resilience at school, and feel secure about the choices they make.

Leaders do not tolerate disruption in lessons. This means pupils can usually concentrate on their studies without interruption. A small number of pupils find it difficult to follow the school's rules when they first attend the school. Staff support these pupils to improve their conduct.

The school identifies pupils' SEND accurately. Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as other pupils. Teachers support pupils with SEND well. They adapt their teaching methods carefully so that pupils with SEND can learn successfully. Teaching assistants support pupils with SEND well in lessons.

Leaders promote pupils' broader development in many ways. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually and morally. These include daily prayers and reflective readings with moral messages. All pupils take part in these occasions. Leaders support pupils to develop important personal characteristics, such as independence, and leadership skills. Staff encourage pupils to be compassionate. Some pupils are actively involved in volunteering and charity fundraising. The range of extra-curricular options is relatively small. This is particularly the case in the sixth form. Many pupils do not take part in clubs and activities.

Leaders are highly effective at identifying priorities and taking action to improve the school. They lead with integrity. School leaders make decisions with pupils' best interests in mind. They engage with staff well. Leaders have ensured a motivated workforce, committed to the aims of the school. The multi-academy trust has taken effective steps to ensure that all staff have manageable workloads.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff's safeguarding training is up to date. Staff are well informed about the risks pupils face. They are alert to signs that a pupil may need extra help to keep them safe. Staff also appreciate the importance of understanding individual, local and regional circumstances when safeguarding pupils.

Leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure pupils get the help they need quickly. Their record-keeping is meticulous.

The school curriculum teaches pupils about potential risks. Pupils know that if they have concerns or worries, staff will take their problems seriously.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A minority of teachers do not use the school's recently introduced assessment approach consistently well. This means that some pupils' misconceptions are not identified and addressed quickly enough. Leaders should make sure all teachers are supported to assess pupils' understanding of the curriculum effectively.
- The range of extra-curricular options open to pupils is relatively narrow. This means that there are not enough opportunities for pupils and students to develop their talents and interests. While avoiding additional pressures on staff, leaders should broaden this aspect of the school's enrichment offer, increasing the contribution it makes to pupils' personal development.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 predecessor school, Saint Paul's Catholic School, to be good in January 2018.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 146232 |
| Local authority | Leicester |
| Inspection number | 10254884 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,160 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 220 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Sarah Noon |
| Principal | Shelley Conaghan |
| Website | www.st-pauls.leicester.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- St Paul's Catholic School, a Voluntary Academy is part of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school is a Roman Catholic secondary school. The Diocese of Nottingham last inspected the predecessor school under section 48 in February 2018. The school will be due to have its next section 48 inspection within the next three years.
- The school is located on the same grounds as Krishna Avanti Primary School. There are no other links between the two schools.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. The school uses eight unregistered providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, other leaders, staff and pupils. They also met with trustees of the multi-academy trust and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, science, English, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, talked to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited other subjects, form time and reading interventions.
- An inspector made checks on leaders' use of alternative provision. This included making phone calls to some of the providers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, pupils' personal development and behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through discussion during the inspection and through Ofsted's surveys.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school. The lead inspector also visited the sixth-form study and social areas to find out more about post-16 students' views of the school.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Ellenor Beighton, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alison Davies | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jane Burton | Ofsted Inspector |
| John Morrison | Ofsted Inspector |

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