

Inspection of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic and Church of England Academy

Grangeway, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 5YH

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 March 2025

The quality of education **Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Alicia Freeman. This school is part of the St Joseph 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), Andrew Truby, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ann Connor OBE.

What is it like to attend this school?

The staff at Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic and Church of England Academy want the best for pupils, families and the community. There is a strong sense of belonging and unity. Pupils are proud to belong to this vibrant school community where diversity is cherished. The school is warm and welcoming, and pupils are well cared for by staff. As a result, pupils feel safe in school.

Pupils endeavour to uphold the school's values. Recently, the school has considerably strengthened its approach to managing unacceptable conduct. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They value their friends and the positive relationships that they have with staff. Pupils are happy in school.

The school has increased the level of ambition that it has for pupils' achievement. It has made many positive changes to the quality of education that pupils receive. However, it is too soon to see the full effects of these changes on how well pupils achieve. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is reflected in the most recent published outcomes.

Pupils benefit from the extensive personal development offer available to them. They have many opportunities to take part in an increasing number of extra-curricular activities. This includes sports clubs and residential visits. Pupils are keen to take on leadership roles, such as acting as student chaplains, school council members and mentors for younger pupils.

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

Over the past two years, the school has seen significant changes in leadership. With support from the trust, positive steps have been taken to improve the curriculum. These changes have been largely successful. However, some older pupils have not fully benefited from these curriculum improvements. Some of these pupils have gaps in their learning from weaknesses in the previous curriculum.

The curriculum is now well designed. This ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can build their knowledge in clear, logical steps. More pupils are now studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Teachers have been given the support needed to teach the curriculum effectively. They provide clear explanations and design lessons that help pupils to develop their knowledge well. The school has strengthened its processes for checking how well pupils have learned the curriculum. Teachers identify and address most gaps in pupils' learning quickly. However, at times, teachers' checks do not fully uncover gaps in pupils' understanding or provide enough opportunities for pupils to progress when ready.

The school has robust systems in place for identifying pupils who require additional support, including pupils with SEND. Staff know their pupils well and ensure that all can access the curriculum. The school quickly identifies pupils who need further help to read

fluently. Pupils receive swift and effective support that helps them to read confidently. The school has implemented a range of measures, such as the development of the school library, to promote a culture of reading for enjoyment.

The school has recently enhanced its approach to managing behaviour and for improving attendance. For instance, staff bring together information about pupils' behaviour, safeguarding, attendance and additional needs. In the main, classrooms are calm and orderly. However, too many pupils, including some vulnerable pupils, do not attend school as regularly as they should. The school has suitable processes in place to address this low attendance. These are beginning to take effect. Pupils' rates of attendance are improving.

Pupils confidently discuss topics from their personal, social, and health education lessons. They demonstrate a good understanding of healthy relationships, staying safe, and British values, as well as other cultures and faiths. The school's personal development programme includes comprehensive careers guidance, offering tailored opportunities for pupils to make informed decisions about their future.

Leaders at all levels, including those responsible for governance, understand the priorities of the school. The trust provides supportive challenge to ensure that the school takes effective action to further improve. Leaders are committed to enabling pupils to flourish.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They share the school's resolve to improve the quality of education that it provides. Staff appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload while new initiatives are being introduced.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some older pupils have gaps in their knowledge from weaknesses in the previous curriculum. This hinders these pupils from learning all that they should in readiness for the next stage of their education. The school should ensure that teachers identify and remedy these gaps in pupils' knowledge swiftly.
- In some instances, teachers do not check on pupils' learning as effectively as they should. This sometimes leads to misconceptions not being addressed or pupils not moving onto new learning when they are ready. The school should ensure that teachers are equipped to systematically assess pupils' understanding, to help them to revisit or advance their learning as needed.
- A few pupils do not attend school as often as they should. This further exacerbates the gaps in these pupils' knowledge and prevents them from benefitting from all that the school has to offer. The school should endeavour to build on its recent successes and secure further improvements to these pupils' rates of attendance.

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	149032
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10348393
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	372
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ann Connor OBE
CEO of the trust	Andrew Truby
Headteacher	Alicia Freeman
Website	www.blessedca.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the St Joseph Catholic Multi Academy Trust
- The school has a religious character. It is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury and the Diocese of Chester. The school had its most recent section 48 inspection in June 2024. The school is waiting for confirmation from the dioceses about the timing of its next section 48 inspection.
- Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic and Church of England Academy converted to become an academy school in February 2022. When its predecessor school, St Chads Catholic and Church of England High School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness.
- The school has undergone substantial changes in leadership since the previous inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2023. A new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been in post since September 2024.
- The school makes use of one registered provider of alternative provision for a very small number of pupils.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, CEO and the trust's director of education. The lead inspector had telephone conversations with representatives of the archdioceses and the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with trust directors and representatives of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and history. 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They looked at samples of pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to the staff survey. Inspectors considered the views of pupils through discussions held with them during the inspection. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to the online Ofsted pupil survey.

Inspection team

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