

Inspection of Holy Spirit Catholic Academy

Poulsom Drive, Bootle, Merseyside L30 2NR

Inspection dates:	12 and 13 November 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Michelle Forrest. 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. The headteacher is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils relish their time at this dynamic school. They spoke proudly of the 'Holy Spirit way' and of how important it is to show respect and to always try their best. Pupils develop strong relationships with staff. They know that the adults in school care about their emotional health and physical safety.

Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations for their behaviour. Reception-aged children act as positive role models to children in the Nursery Year. Children in the early years learn cooperatively alongside one another. Older pupils build on this positive start. Their conduct helps to make the school a happy place in which to learn and play.

The school is ambitious for what pupils can achieve. It carefully considers the academic and personal needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are eager to learn and are attentive in lessons. Ongoing improvements to the curriculum mean that current pupils achieve well across a broad range of subjects.

Pupils benefit from a wealth of experiences to develop their character and resilience. For example, older pupils recalled their recent residential trip with enthusiasm. They spoke of overcoming their fears through taking part in an array of outdoor and adventurous activities.

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

The school has been on a rapid journey of improvement since opening as an academy. The trust's ambition for pupils to succeed is unmistakable. It works in close partnership with the local governing body to provide insightful support and challenge. Together, trustees and local governors make a tangible contribution to the leadership of the school.

The school has significantly improved the way that the curriculum is designed and delivered. Its well-crafted curriculum meets the different needs of pupils successfully. Staff benefit from high-quality support and resources to help them to deliver new subject curriculums successfully. Despite brisk change, staff's morale is high.

Typically, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to explain new learning clearly to pupils. They check that pupils have understood what has been taught before they introduce something new. Pupils make meaningful connections between what they know already and new learning. They achieve well in most subjects.

In a small number of subjects, curriculum thinking is not as developed. Some staff continue to develop their expertise in making sure that pupils remember and practise what they have already learned in these subjects. Pupils' knowledge is uneven as a result.

The quality of education that pupils enjoy is not reflected in the school's most recently published provisional data. In 2024, the proportion of pupils who left Year 6 meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below the national average. Despite the school's best efforts, these pupils had deep-seated gaps in

their knowledge. There was not enough time for them to benefit from the school's significant curriculum improvements. Current pupils are learning the intended curriculum well. They are better equipped for the next stage of their education.

The school identifies any pupils who may have SEND effectively. It communicates well with a range of professionals to secure expert help for these pupils, should they need it. Staff make careful adaptations to their teaching to enable pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum alongside their classmates.

The school's focus on spoken language means that pupils communicate their ideas with increasing clarity. Staff immerse children in the early years in a world of songs, rhymes and stories. In this way, children are introduced to ambitious words that they may not encounter in everyday speech. They are well prepared to access the school's phonics programme.

Suitably trained staff follow the school's approaches to teaching early reading closely. Most children start to build their phonics knowledge effectively from the Reception Year. Pupils practise their reading using books that closely match the sounds that they know. Even so, some of the support that the school provides for struggling readers is not as effective as it could be. This means that some pupils do not learn to read with fluency and accuracy as quickly as they could.

The school has strengthened its approach to improving pupils' attendance. It works with increasing success with parents and carers to reduce pupils' absence levels and to improve punctuality. For example, many pupils start the school day at the 'magic' breakfast club. This means that they arrive on time and that they are ready to learn.

Pupils receive impressive support for their wider development. They learn to recognise and regulate their emotions, for example by spending focused time with Star, the school's therapy dog. Pupils learn how to keep safe and healthy. They celebrate the differences that exist between themselves and others in society. They are prepared well for life beyond their local area.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not support a small number of pupils who struggle with their reading as effectively as it could. This hampers how quickly these pupils learn to read fluently and accurately. The school should support staff in using early reading strategies consistently well so that pupils gain secure phonics knowledge.

- Some teachers do not implement the curriculum consistently well in a small number of foundation subjects. Subsequently, pupils do not learn and remember subject knowledge as well as they should in these subjects. The school should refine its curriculum design in these remaining subjects. This is so that teachers know exactly what knowledge must be taught, emphasised and recalled so that pupils gain a deep body of knowledge over time.

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	149029
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10348391
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ann Connor OBE
CEO of the trust	Andrew Truby
Headteacher	Michelle Forrest
Website	www.holyspiritcatholicprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the St Joseph Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- Holy Spirit Catholic Academy converted to become an academy in April 2022. When its predecessor school, Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in June 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place during the academic year 2026 to 2027.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school offers a breakfast club provision for pupils.

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 educational provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school.
- An inspector met with trust leaders, including the chair of the trust, the CEO and the director of primary education. An inspector also met with the chair of the local governing body.
- An inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the archdiocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- An inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics and history. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects. They spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects and reviewed a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes and when they moved around the school. An inspector scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they dropped their children off at school. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- There were no responses to the online survey for pupils. However, inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- An inspector visited the school's breakfast club.

Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, lead inspector

Vicky Briggs

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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