

Inspection of St Ambrose Catholic Academy

Alderfield Drive, Speke, Liverpool, Merseyside L24 7SF

Inspection dates:	25 and 26 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
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 Tracy Moorcroft. This school is part of 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?

Pupils enjoy their warm welcome each day from Luna, the school dog, and from the staff team. Pupils feel happy and ready to learn in school, which is a safe haven for many.

Pupils exemplify the school's values of 'hope, believe and achieve'. Their behaviours and attitudes towards each other are highly positive. The adventurous outdoor opportunities at playtime help pupils of all ages to mix confidently. As a result, pupils work and play together in harmony. There is a real sense of family at St Ambrose.

The school is highly ambitious for pupils' achievement. Pupils study a curriculum that engages and supports them to gain deep knowledge. Pupils achieve well. The early years setting is vibrant, successful and prioritises children's language development. Children get off to a flying start on their learning journey.

Pupils enjoy exceptional pastoral care blended with a wide range of opportunities. They talk with enthusiasm about their many leadership roles and their contribution to the life of the school and local community. Pupils' talents and interests are fostered remarkably well through a vast array of after-school clubs and enrichment opportunities. Everyone can excel in something, whether that be in sports, music, textiles, chess or gardening.

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

Over recent years, the school and trust have improved the curriculum. Experienced staff with strong subject knowledge bring the curriculum to life. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. The curriculum takes account of the children's starting points in the early years, building their knowledge and skills throughout their time in school. Support from staff is effective and allows many pupils to achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Effective professional development enables staff to teach the curriculum with confidence.

Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND swiftly. They are adept at supporting these pupils well. Staff adapt the curriculum delivery successfully to meet pupils' individual needs. Within lessons, staff effectively check what pupils know. However, in a small number of subjects, the systems for checking what pupils know and remember over time are less effective. This means that, in these areas, gaps in learning go unaddressed. As a result, some pupils are unable to make connections with their prior learning.

Reading is a high priority across the school, with staff trained to deliver the phonics programme effectively. Children in the early years enjoy stories and rhymes, helping them to develop an enjoyment of books. Staff provide effective support for those needing extra help. This builds pupils' confidence, helping most to become fluent, accurate readers. However, the same level of readiness is not reflected in terms of early writing for a small number of pupils. For a few pupils, in the early stages of learning to write, they develop errors in relation to their letter formation and spelling. These are not consistently addressed. This hinders the quality of some pupils' written communication.

The school has taken effective steps to improve attendance. Leaders have well-established, rigorous systems and procedures in place to check on absences. They swiftly work with pupils and their parents to support them to overcome any barriers to their regular attendance. Pupils' behaviour in classrooms is positive and respectful. This is helped significantly by the pupils' understanding of what is expected of them through the school's 'bee' rules.

Personal development is rooted in the culture of the school. Pupils talk with maturity about being safe online and in the local community. They model tolerance, respect and equality. Pupils talk with understanding about different faiths and cultures. They discuss ideas like democracy and the rule of law knowledgeably. Pupils develop high aspirations for future careers as a result of their learning. They value access to a wide range of clubs and activities that introduce them to new experiences. Well-thought-out enrichment activities help pupils experience the world beyond the school.

The school, the local governing body and the trust endeavour to improve the standards of education year-on-year. Parents and carers value the close-knit school community and the support that the school gives to them. Most staff feel valued and proud to work at this school. They appreciate the coaching that the school and trust offer as part of their professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, the school does not check that pupils remember what they have been taught over time. As a result, some gaps in learning remain unaddressed, and pupils cannot confidently recall their previous learning as well as they might. The school should ensure that pupils' learning is secure before introducing new concepts.
- In some cases, the school does not ensure that pupils in the early stages of learning to write master accurate letter formation by the time that they leave Year 2. This hinders their writing fluency as they move through the curriculum. The school should ensure that pupils have the skills that they need to be successful writers by the end of key stage 1.

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	149133
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10348400
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	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ann Connor OBE
CEO of the trust	Andrew Truby
Headteacher	Tracy Moorcroft
Website	www.stambroseprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Ambrose Catholic Academy converted to become an academy in April 2022. When its predecessor school, St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged as requires improvement for overall effectiveness.
- This Roman Catholic school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in June 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection is due before June 2026.
- Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The school runs a before-school club for pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its 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 education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics and history. They met with subject leaders and with teachers. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects. They met with leaders, spoke with pupils and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- 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.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the trust and local governing body. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Helen Friend, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Valmai Roberts

Ofsted Inspector

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