

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Walton Avenue, Penketh, Warrington, Cheshire WA5 2AU

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 June 2025

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this friendly and welcoming school. Positive relationships between staff and pupils create a safe space. In this environment, pupils feel secure and comfortable sharing their worries or concerns.

The school's values of love, care and respect are embedded throughout the curriculum and underpin the positive relationships between all in the school. Pupils are well-mannered. They extend a warm welcome to visitors.

Pupils enjoy learning and socialising with their peers. Playtimes and learning times are happy and fun. Those who find it more challenging to manage their feelings receive tailored support from skilled staff. As a result, their behaviour improves over time.

The school has high aspirations for pupils' achievement. Typically, pupils achieve well. Children in the early years are well prepared for key stage 1, and pupils in Year 6 are ready for their secondary education.

Pupils excel in their various roles and responsibilities. These include playleaders and school councillors. Older pupils are proud to be 'special friends' to children in the early years. Pupils make a tangible contribution to school life through these roles. They are involved in projects in the local community, such as litter picking and foodbank donations. This contributes strongly to pupils' personal development.

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

The school has worked effectively to secure improvements to the quality of the curriculum, including reading, since the last inspection. These developments to the curriculum have ensured that staff in key stages 1 and 2 have greater clarity about the important learning that they need to focus on with their class. This is also the case in the early years, where the curriculum, in most areas of learning, outlines the essential knowledge that children should learn in readiness for key stage 1.

In most subjects, staff check pupils' learning regularly and use the information that they gather to adapt future teaching. However, in a few subjects, where the curriculum is relatively new, the school is in the process of developing its approach to checking what pupils know and remember. In these subjects, on occasion, this hinders teaching in identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Reading is a priority. Pupils benefit from reading a wide range of interesting and diverse books. Most pupils are fluent, accurate readers. Staff act swiftly to help any pupils who find reading difficult. This helps these pupils to keep up with the phonics programme. The school shows pupils how to form letters and how to practise their writing. However, staff sometimes do not spot and correct errors in pupils' writing. As a result, some pupils persist with incorrect spellings and struggle to write accurately and fluently across the curriculum.

Pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school. They engage positively in their learning and are typically attentive during lessons. Children in the Reception class settle in well. They receive effective support to learn classroom routines and expectations. This helps children to learn and to play cooperatively alongside each other.

The school places great importance on pupils' regular attendance. Pupils know that they need to be in school in order to learn. This has ensured high rates of attendance for the large majority of pupils. For those pupils who do not attend school regularly, the school offers effective support to families to reduce absence levels.

Staff get to know pupils well, which means that they are alert to their individual needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils benefit from the support that they receive. This ensures that they can access the same curriculum as their peers. Staff are well informed about the best ways to help pupils with SEND succeed in all aspects of their development.

Pupils have a strong understanding of what it means to be fair and to treat everyone with respect. For instance, children in the early years learn to share and take turns, while older pupils learn to listen to the opinions of others, even if they disagree with them. The school ensures that pupils are aware of, and respectful towards, people from cultures that may be different to their own. Nevertheless, the school has not ensured that some pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of the importance of fundamental British values.

Most staff are happy and proud to work at this school. The school is considerate of their workload and well-being. Governors support the school well. They have a range of skills that allow them to understand the school, including the curriculum, and support its 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 some subjects, assessment strategies are at an early stage of development. As a result, sometimes the school does not identify key gaps in pupils' learning or adapt future teaching to help pupils overcome these deficits in knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers are suitably equipped to check pupils' learning across the curriculum and ensure that pupils learn important knowledge securely.
- The school has not ensured that errors in pupils' writing are identified and addressed consistently well. As a result, some pupils continue to make the same mistakes over time. The school should ensure that systems are in place to spot and remedy the mistakes that pupils make when writing, so that pupils are supported to develop greater accuracy and expertise in their writing across the curriculum.
- The school has not ensured that some pupils have the depth of knowledge that they should about the importance of fundamental British values. This means that some pupils are not as fully prepared for life in modern Britain as they could be. The school should ensure that staff are fully equipped to support pupils to develop an age-appropriate understanding of fundamental British values.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2016.

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	111373
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10348070
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kathryn Price
Headteacher	Alan Saunders
Website	www.stjprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- This Roman Catholic school is within the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in February 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due from September 2025.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and with other school leaders. She also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- The inspector spoke with pupils, in meetings and lunch time, about their wider experience of school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also spoke with some parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Victoria Burnside, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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