

Inspection of St Nicholas Catholic Academy

Orthes Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L3 5XF

Inspection dates:	21 and 22 January 2025
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 Paul Ackers. 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, Andrew Truby, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ann Connor OBE.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Nicholas is a school where everyone is included. The many families who arrive from all over the world are made to feel very welcome. Pupils are soon integrated into school life. Each morning, pupils arrive at school eager to learn. They are greeted warmly by staff who know them well. As one pupil said, 'You can come to this school and be whoever you are'.

The school expects pupils to achieve well, and they do. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils are self-assured. At playtime they love to play with friends of all ages. They move calmly around school. They open doors for visitors and are polite and helpful. They relish helping those who need it. For example, pupils dress up to raise money and donate food for local families.

Pupils benefit from a range of clubs such as chess, multi-sports and drama. The school gives pupils the opportunity to take part in competitive sport. For example, the girls' and boys' football teams enjoy success.

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

The school, working with the trust, has designed subject curriculums that are well sequenced and progressive. Staff have secure knowledge. This enables them to carefully choose activities that help pupils to learn well. Pupils, including those with SEND, are able to talk confidently about the knowledge that they have learned. This includes learning from some time ago. The school has made clear what it expects staff to teach and when. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not implemented consistently well. In some classes, the intended subject content is not delivered as intended.

Reading is given a high priority. In the Nursery class, children start to develop a love of reading. They join in with stories that they know. The school's phonics programme starts swiftly in Reception. Children learn the sounds and letters that they need to know to start to learn to read. As pupils move through key stage 1, they become more accurate and fluent readers. Pupils who need additional support are identified and receive the help that they need to keep up with the phonics programme. New pupils, whose first language is not English, are well supported. Thanks to the expertise of experienced staff, these pupils soon begin to speak and then read English. These pupils get the help that they need to access the curriculum.

In all subjects, there are regular checks on what pupils are learning. However, in some subjects, this information is not shared well enough beyond each classroom. This means that the school does not have a deep enough understanding of what pupils know and can do. This prevents the school from making any necessary changes to the curriculum.

Pupils with SEND are identified effectively. The school ensures that, where appropriate, activities are adapted to meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils benefit from specialist and individualised support where it is needed.

The early years environment is nurturing. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are actively engaged and excited to learn. Well-qualified staff encourage children to develop their spoken language. From the start, the youngest children learn how to follow the school's core principles and expectations. They follow instructions well and are kind to one another. This continues throughout the school where pupils behave well and listen attentively in class. Pupils of all ages have positive attitudes to learning.

The school has a comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education. This enables pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and to recognise what these look like in the friendships that they have. They appreciate the range of ways the school supports their mental health. Pupils know why it is important to celebrate and value the differences between themselves and others. Pupils learn about fundamental British values. For example, they know about democracy and can talk about the Suffragettes and their fight for women's right to vote. There are opportunities for pupils to take a variety of leadership roles. 'Head pupils', 'house captains' and 'school councillors' enjoy helping the school to be a better place. The recently appointed 'stewards' ensure that lunchtimes run smoothly.

The school has worked tirelessly to improve pupils' attendance. These strategies are making a difference. Where pupils' attendance remains a concern, the school works with families to offer them the help they need.

The local governing board and the trust are committed to the school. They work together to offer the support and challenge that the school needs. Staff appreciate the benefits that come from being part of this trust. For example, they value the expertise of trust staff and the training that they provide.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some inconsistencies in how well some subjects are implemented. Sometimes, the curriculum content that the school intends for pupils to learn is not covered when the school says that it should be taught. This could lead to gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well and that pupils cover the content in these subjects as intended.
- In some subjects, the school does not have a deep enough understanding of what pupils know and can do. This affects how well the school can make the necessary changes to the curriculum in response to what pupils need to learn and when. The

school should refine its approaches to assessment to ensure that staff are clear about what pupils have learned. The school should use this information to make any adjustments to the curriculum where necessary.

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	149132
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10348399
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	192
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ann Connor OBE
CEO of the trust	Andrew Truby
Headteacher	Paul Ackers
Website	www.stnicholasliverpool.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 does not make use of any alternative provision.
- This Catholic school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Its last section 48 inspection, for schools with a religious character, took place in May 2018. This was for the predecessor school. The next inspection is due by the end of the current academic year.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the school joined the trust.

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. An inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English including early reading, mathematics 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.
- An inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- An inspector observed pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders. An inspector also met with members of the local governing board, including the chair.
- An inspector met with the chief executive officer, the director of primary education and the chair of the trustees.
- An inspector met with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and breaktimes. They also spoke with pupils about their views of school life.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents. They reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspectors considered the views of staff who responded to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Frith Murphy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Vicky Briggs

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025