

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

Upper Marsh Lane, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8BN

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 December 2024

Outcome

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

The executive headteacher of this school is Joanne Walsh. This school is part of St Francis of Assisi Catholic 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 Celano, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Father Peter Harris.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are confident and friendly. They are self-assured and talk about their pride in their school. They are polite to others in the school. This creates a respectful atmosphere. Many pupils and staff members have developed positive relationships. Pupils learn they can rely on staff, which makes them feel well cared for.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. The vast majority of pupils understand the school rules and most follow them. The youngest children settle into school well and understand and follow the school's routines. This means the school is calm and pupils can focus on learning.

Most pupils work hard and try their best. In many subjects, pupils can have in-depth conversations about their understanding. Staff support pupils by identifying gaps in their knowledge and addressing misconceptions. Pupils achieve well in most subjects.

Older pupils are positive role models. Pupils contribute to the school through positions of responsibility. For example, members of the school council have improved the school for the pupils by fundraising for new playground equipment. Pupils learn about various faiths and cultures. The school's strong focus on pupils' understanding of democracy and other fundamental British values prepares them well for life beyond school.

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

The school's curriculum is carefully planned from Reception to Year 6. Staff ensure that learning connects and that important knowledge is revisited. This helps pupils to learn and remember ideas and concepts well. The youngest children learn foundational knowledge through well-designed tasks. For example, they learn the basics of scientific understanding by completing interesting investigations, such as learning about objects that sink or float. Staff develop children's language and communication skills well. Children build a broad vocabulary in the Reception Year, which prepares them well for Year 1. Generally, staff have strong subject knowledge. They explain tasks clearly to pupils. They create suitable subject-specific activities that further develop pupils' knowledge. As a result, pupils learn well in most subjects.

The school recently revised the curriculum in a few subjects. As a result, some older pupils have not learned all the previous content. This has created gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The school has begun to address this by checking pupils' understanding. However, these gaps are yet to be fully addressed.

Pupils achieve well in reading. This begins in the early years, where children learn songs and rhymes. These help children to recognise the sounds used in words. Staff have the knowledge and expertise to deliver the phonics programme well. They accurately model the sounds pupils need to learn. Any pupils who need additional support receive catch-up sessions to ensure they become fluent readers. Pupils have lots of opportunities to practise their reading. They read books that match their phonics knowledge. As a result, they become confident readers.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Well-matched learning plans outline how staff can help pupils. Staff use these to help adapt learning to ensure pupils with SEND can access an ambitious curriculum. This ensures the school provides effective support for pupils with SEND to succeed.

Pupils generally behave well across the school. Low-level disruption is not accepted by staff. In a few classes, teachers have to remind pupils of the rules quite regularly, which can slow learning a bit. In most classes, however, the pupils behave well and work hard. At lunchtime, pupils feel safe and happy.

Pupils learn a comprehensive personal development programme. They learn how to understand and explain their feelings as soon as they join the school. They also learn how to get on well with others and consider their peers' feelings. Pupils understand that everyone is different and celebrate uniqueness. Pupils can attend many trips and clubs, which are enjoyable, expand their interests and develop different skills.

The school works closely with governors and the trust. Trustees hold the school accountable and carry out their statutory duties. This support and challenge helps the school to continually improve. Parents appreciate the school's nurturing environment,

which benefits their children. Staff feel that actions to reduce workload have a positive impact and they are well supported in carrying out their roles.

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 in a few subjects because they have not learned the full curriculum content. This means that pupils do not always retain new knowledge, as they cannot securely connect it to past learning. The school must check pupils' progress in these subjects and continue to address any gaps and misconceptions to prepare pupils for their future learning.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Cross Catholic Primary School, to be good for overall effectiveness in June 2019.

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	148496
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345542
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Father Peter Harris
CEO of the trust	Andrew Celano
Headteacher	Joanne Walsh
Website	www.stcross.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is part of St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust.
- This is a Catholic school in the Diocese of Westminster. The school's most recent inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, took place in 2018. The school's next section 48 inspection is due next year.
- The school does not use an alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, other leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair. They also met with representatives from the local authority, the trust and the diocese.
- 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 considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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