

Inspection of a good school: St Austin's Catholic Primary School

Riverbank Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L19 9DH

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 October 2023

Outcome

St Austin's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly and welcoming school. Pupils, including children in the early years, arrive each morning smiling and ready to learn. Parents and carers appreciate that their children benefit from the school's nurturing environment. Pupils have positive relationships with each other and with staff.

Pupils know the school rules and strive to be ready, respectful and safe in all that they do. At breaktimes, pupils play happily together. They share any worries that they may have with their teachers. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe.

The school sets high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils work hard to meet these expectations. In lessons, they listen carefully to teachers' instructions and are keen to contribute their ideas. Most pupils achieve well.

Pupils are proud ambassadors of their school. They relish the opportunities that they experience. For example, they talked with pride about a recent high-profile singing performance that they took part in. Pupils were also keen to share their learning from their Spanish and Mandarin lessons in school.

Pupils learn how to make a positive contribution. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously, for example as house captains. Representatives from the school council spoke proudly about their recent work to change the uniform policy in school. Pupils also enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities that develop their interests, such as cross country, computing, football and a samba band.

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

The school has designed the curriculum to ensure that pupils, including those with SEND, have a rich and broad learning experience. The curriculum is organised so that staff are

clear about the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will be taught and when this should happen. This builds in a logical way from the Nursery Year to Year 6.

Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND at the earliest opportunity. These pupils receive support that is matched to their individual needs. Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers and are fully involved in all aspects of school life.

In 2022, the proportion of Year 6 pupils meeting the expected standard in writing and science was lower than the national average. The school identified the reasons for this and has made changes to these curriculums. The school has taken effective steps to address any gaps in pupils' learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, pupils learn better than they did in a range of subjects.

The school has prioritised the teaching of reading. Staff are well trained and deliver the phonics programme consistently across the different year groups. Children in the Nursery class join in with rhymes and songs to help develop their early language. This prepares them well for learning phonics as soon as they enter the Reception Year.

Pupils look forward to story time with their teachers. Older pupils understand the importance of reading to develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Staff ensure that pupils read books that match the sounds that they know. They provide pupils who need extra help with appropriate support. As a result, most pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The school provides regular subject-specific training for staff. This helps staff to develop their subject knowledge. They present information to pupils clearly. In lessons, teachers check that pupils have understood new learning. If pupils have any misconceptions, teachers ensure that these are quickly addressed. Consequently, pupils achieve well across a range of subjects.

In a small number of subjects, pupils do not build on their prior learning as well as they could. The school has begun to refine these curriculums in response to this. These changes are recent. Some pupils' recall of their previous learning in these subjects remains superficial. This means that at times, these pupils do not learn all that they should.

Children in the early years settle quickly into school routines. Pupils across school display positive attitudes to learning. They can concentrate in their lessons as disruption to their learning is rare.

Pupils learn about different families, cultures and faiths. They know how important it is to respect and tolerate others. Pupils are taught to care for the environment through their work in the school polytunnel. They enjoy growing a range of crops to sell and use in the school kitchen. Pupils take great pride in having their sporting achievements shared in the school newspaper.

The school provides parents with information about how to support their children at home. This includes reading, mathematics and online safety workshops. Parents are also

invited to meet and greet sessions with teachers to learn more about the year group expectations for their child.

Governors know the school well. They challenge and support the school effectively to ensure ongoing improvements to the quality of education for all pupils. The school actively engages with staff to ensure that their workload is considered when making changes to policies and the curriculum. Staff appreciate the time they are provided with to fulfil 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)

- In a small number of subjects, some pupils struggle to make connections between their previous knowledge and new learning. Occasionally, this hinders how well pupils learn. The school should ensure that the recent changes to these subject curriculums are well embedded so that pupils develop detailed knowledge across the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 in March 2014.

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	104643
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10291382
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anna Hosey-Davis
Headteacher	Colette Hickey
Website	www.st-austins.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in January 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place between 2028 and 2031.
- The governing body is responsible for a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school makes use of one registered alternate provider.

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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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.

- The inspector also spoke with subject leaders, spoke to pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The inspector observed pupils from key stages 1 and 2 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders. She also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She met with representatives of the local authority and of the archdiocese.
- The inspector talked with staff and leaders about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector met with the leaders who are responsible for behaviour, SEND and pupils' wider development.
- 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 spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school. She looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. She also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- The inspector met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Rebecca Jewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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