

Inspection of a good school: St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Edward Street, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 0BW

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are happy, polite and well-mannered. Leaders ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of the harmful effects of bullying. Pupils feel safe in school because staff deal with any rare incidents of bullying or unkindness swiftly and effectively.

Pupils know that teachers have high expectations for their learning. Leaders ensure that these expectations are met by all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In the main, pupils achieve well.

Staff expect the best of pupils' behaviour. Pupils rise to these high expectations. As a result, the school is calm and pupils can get on with their learning, with very little disruption to lessons.

Pupils are eager to take on extra responsibilities, such as acting as lunchtime play leaders. They are considerate of the feelings and welfare of others. Pupils understand the importance of keeping fit and looking after their mental health.

Leaders promote pupils' wider development well. Pupils enjoy a variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including netball, choir and reading club. Pupils across key stage 1 and key stage 2 look forward to residential trips, which help them to develop their self-confidence and lifelong skills.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum for pupils, including children in the early years and pupils with SEND.

In most subjects, leaders have carefully identified the essential knowledge that pupils must learn and the order in which learning should be taught. Pupils learn and remember the intended curriculum well. That said, in a small number of subjects, leaders have not

considered carefully enough the knowledge that pupils most need to be successful. In these few subjects, teachers are not as clear about what should be taught and when. As a result, some teachers do not deliver the curriculum as well as leaders intend. This hampers the progress that some pupils make in these subjects. In the main, teachers use leaders' assessment systems appropriately to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum.

For the most part, leaders have designed a suitable curriculum for children in the Reception Year. However, in some subjects, leaders are not as clear about what some children should learn. Leaders are unclear about what specific vocabulary, skills and knowledge children should be taught in readiness for Year 1. This hinders staff in designing appropriate learning activities for children.

Leaders ensure that reading is a high priority across the school, and staff promote a love of reading among pupils. Teachers immerse pupils in a wide range of high-quality texts. Leaders train staff to deliver the phonics programme effectively and with consistency. Pupils practise reading using books matched accurately to the sounds that they know. Staff provide targeted support for pupils who need to catch up in reading. In the early years, staff encourage children to develop their awareness of letters and sounds. Staff support children to develop their communication and language skills well.

Leaders are knowledgeable about SEND, and staff are equipped well to identify pupils' additional needs swiftly. Leaders use their expertise to identify training opportunities for staff and to provide guidance on how best to support pupils with SEND in the classroom. Teachers carefully adapt the delivery of the curriculum to ensure that pupils with SEND achieve well.

Staff treat pupils fairly and with respect. Staff work closely with leaders and the pastoral team in managing pupils' behaviour effectively. In early years, children settle quickly and follow the routines of the day. Across the rest of the school, pupils' learning is rarely disrupted by low-level behaviour.

Leaders promote pupils' wider development well. This learning is underpinned by leaders' vision to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. There is a well-designed personal, social and health education curriculum that promotes all aspects of pupils' personal development. Pupils develop a well-informed respect for cultural diversity. They learn to value and celebrate each other's differences.

Governors are committed to their roles. They have high expectations of leaders, and hold them to account diligently. Staff enjoy working at the school and said that leaders do all that they can to support their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and alert to the possibility that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They provide regular safeguarding training for all staff. Leaders

also ensure that adults who work at the school know how to respond if they have any safeguarding concerns about pupils.

Leaders work closely with outside agencies to ensure that support is available to pupils and their families when needed. Staff also ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, particularly when working or playing online. As a result, pupils know that they can talk to a trusted adult.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not considered carefully enough the small steps in learning that pupils need to be successful in subsequent learning. As a result, some teachers do not design learning as leaders intend. Leaders should ensure that staff are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn so that staff can deliver the curriculum with confidence.
- Some subject leaders are not as clear about what some children should learn in the early years in readiness for the demands of Year 1. This hinders staff in designing suitable learning for children. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders have a secure understanding of what children in early years need to know and remember and how this knowledge builds from the early years to Year 6.

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 November 2013.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	111392
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10283629
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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lesley Pearsall
Headteacher	Nicola Dickinson
Website	www.st-johnfisherprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- St John Fisher Catholic Primary School is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2019.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector met with representatives of the governing body, the Archdiocese of Liverpool and the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector looked at the single central record of staff suitability checks. They met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding and sampled case studies and documentation.
- The inspector met with pupils and spoke to pupils during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector spoke with some parents and carers as they dropped their children off at school. They also reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector held meetings with members of staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Kelly Butler, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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