

Inspection of St Austin's Catholic Primary School

Heath Street, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 5NJ

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 May 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to belong to St Austin's Catholic Primary School. They are attentive in class, behave well and show respect towards each other and adults.

Pupils are happy at school. They enjoy attending the breakfast club, where they catch up with their friends. They also take part in different after-school clubs. These opportunities help pupils to pursue their interests in areas such as art, music, singing and sports. Pupils are especially keen to enhance their skills in gymnastics, judo, swimming and dancing.

Pupils respond positively to the high expectations that staff have of their behaviour and achievement. As a result, the school is a calm and purposeful place where most pupils achieve well in different subjects.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe at school. They said that, should bullying happen, staff deal with it swiftly.

Pupils learn about equality and diversity. They appreciate fundamental British values. Pupils are active citizens who raise funds for good causes.

Pupils have many opportunities to show their leadership skills. For example, they act as prefects and library monitors. Pupils participate in events at the local church and in the community. They enjoy trips to museums and local places of interest, which enhance their learning.

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

Leaders and governors have developed a broad and well-ordered curriculum. The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and children in the early years. All staff agree that they are supported well and feel that they are valued by leaders.

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils. They ensure that in most subjects staff know how to deliver the curriculum well. Teachers routinely check to see what pupils know and can remember. Teachers then adapt their lessons to address pupils' needs. This helps to ensure that most pupils achieve highly across the school. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not check regularly enough to see if pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This hinders teachers from designing learning that builds on what pupils already know.

Leaders place a high priority on reading. They see reading as the key to successful learning in all subjects. Staff deliver well-structured and logically ordered phonics and reading curriculums well. Children begin to learn to read as soon as they start in the Reception class.

Children, and pupils in Years 1 and 2, are familiar with the phonics programme and respond to it well. Staff carefully match the books that pupils read to the letters, sounds

and words that pupils know. This helps pupils to develop into confident readers as they move through the school. Most older pupils read clearly and fluently. They read regularly and enjoy books by different authors.

Pupils with SEND are identified quickly. Their needs are met well by caring staff who are suitably knowledgeable. Staff work closely with parents and carers, and different specialists, to make sure that pupils get the support that they need. Teachers ensure that pupils with SEND access an ambitious curriculum in all key stages, including the early years. Pupils with SEND achieve well as a result.

Pupils display sensible and mature behaviour. They have positive attitudes to learning. This helps to create a purposeful climate for learning that pervades the school. Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. In the early years, children learn routines quickly and follow instructions closely. Their admirable concentration creates a magical atmosphere during story time.

Leaders, staff and members of the wider school community help pupils to 'grow in faith together'. Leaders promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn how to maintain their physical and mental well-being. Older pupils care for and mentor younger pupils. For example, they act as agony 'aunts' and 'uncles' to provide advice and a listening ear to their peers. All such activities prepare pupils well for the next stage of their learning in high school.

Governors work closely with senior leaders to help them to continually improve the school. They know where the school's strengths are. They also know what leaders need to develop further. Governors and leaders make sure that staff get the essential training they need to deliver the curriculum efficiently.

Parents typically describe leaders and staff as being responsive to their children's needs. They told inspectors that their children are happy and safe in school and that they make good progress. Staff describe leaders as being caring. They said that leaders are mindful of their well-being and do not burden them with unnecessary work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to keep pupils safe. The safeguarding team is trained to a high standard. They make sure that staff are kept up to date on matters relating to pupils' safety.

Thorough induction procedures are in place for new staff. All staff are trained well at spotting potential signs of neglect or abuse. They know exactly what to do if they are concerned about the welfare or safety of a pupil.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through different aspects of the curriculum. For example, they learn how to use the internet and mobile technology safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers do not revisit and reinforce pupils' previous learning as well or check what learning pupils have committed to their long-term memory. Teachers should check effectively how well pupils are learning the curriculum in these subjects. This will help teachers to establish what pupils know and can remember and address any gaps that pupils may have in their learning.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	104806
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10226182
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	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Burke
Headteacher	Patricia Wade
Website	www.st-austins.st-helens.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school. The last section 48 inspection was carried out in February 2020.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They also held meetings with other leaders, including those responsible for SEND and the early years.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. He held telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives into early reading, mathematics, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors spoke with parents to gather their views about the school. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, as well as free-text comments. Inspectors reviewed responses from staff to Ofsted's survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey to consider.
- Inspectors examined a range of policies and documents. They also spoke to safeguarding leaders about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy, and talked with pupils about their safety and welfare.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Claire Hollister

Ofsted Inspector

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