

Inspection of a good school: Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School

High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 1HG

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2023

Outcome

Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Bernadette O'Hanlon. This school is part of All Saints 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, Stephen Wheatley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Leahy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy, safe and valued, whatever their background, within the Catholic identity of this school. The school prioritises the well-being and personal development of pupils. They receive high-quality guidance and care, which helps them to become better citizens. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their lessons.

The school has high expectations that all pupils will learn and remember the curriculum. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are well supported to meet these expectations. They work very hard as a result. They typically remember and can recall the knowledge and concepts studied.

Pupils attend school regularly, arrive promptly and behave well. They are polite and courteous. They move around the site showing consideration for others. Teachers deal with any slips in the normal high standards of behaviour fairly and consistently. On the rare occasions where bullying occurs, pupils know who they can talk with, so that it stops.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. They can attend various clubs, visits and trips. For example, pupil-led music forms a key part of the school's regular festivals and celebrations.

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

The school has mapped out what pupils need to learn across all key stages. This includes identifying the most important knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn in every topic. This well-thought-through approach means pupils always have the prior understanding they need. They approach new topics with confidence.

Teachers explain information carefully and patiently. As a result, pupils listen closely. This helps them to remember what they are taught. Teachers use skilful questioning to explore what pupils can recall. They return to any areas where they find gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils rarely get left behind.

Teachers do not always get the subject-specific training they need to develop their knowledge and understanding in their curriculum areas. As a result, they do not effectively adapt their teaching to ensure pupils deepen their understanding. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Teachers and pupils share very positive relationships. Teachers use the behaviour policy consistently. This helps to provide a calm and respectful atmosphere between the different members of the school community.

Pupils with SEND are very well supported. Teachers know the most effective strategies to help them learn the same curriculum as everyone else. Teaching assistants help pupils with SEND to work as independently as they can.

The school has a strong culture of pupils reading for pleasure. Pupils love the opportunities they have to read with their tutors. They 'drop everything and read'. Teachers make sure that pupils have reading books which develop their fluency and comprehension. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to read in wider curriculum subjects. Other subject departments do not always contribute effectively to the development of pupils' reading skills. This can limit pupils' wider knowledge and their vocabulary development.

The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to shape the life of the school. Pupils develop their leadership skills through a number of positions of responsibility. For example, the student executive committee, led by sixth-form students, recently established a successful 'culture week.' This celebrated the cultural diversity of the school. Sixth-form students are excellent role models for other pupils. They act as buddies and mentors for pupils in the lower school.

Pupils confidently consider and debate a range of moral issues. They do this both in their subjects, and in the wide range of clubs and societies they can join. However, the school does not monitor which pupils attend extra-curricular clubs in enough detail. This hinders their work to increase the participation of disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND.

The school regularly reviews the curriculum to strengthen it further. This has contributed to positive national examination results over time. Staff feel confident that these changes have been made with their well-being and workload firmly in mind.

The school prepares pupils well for the next stages of their lives. The careers programme is very well planned, including in the sixth form. Pupils get a number of opportunities to experience and understand the world of work. They are provided with useful information

and guidance about future options. These help to ensure they are successful in their choice of work or study after they leave school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always receive the subject-specific training they need to help some pupils deepen and extend their knowledge and understanding sufficiently. As a result, these pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. The school needs to ensure that there is a coherent programme of subject-specific training in place.
- Subject departments are not providing enough opportunities for pupils to read within each curriculum subject area. This means that pupils are not developing their subject-specific vocabulary. The school needs to ensure that there is a consistent approach across subjects to promote subject-specific reading.

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 December 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' 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	137914
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10288512
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1229
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	179
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tony Leahy
Headteacher	Bernadette O'Hanlon
Website	www.joa.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school has a religious character, Roman Catholic, and was last inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 24 and 25 May 2023. The school's next Section 48 inspection will be in five years.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers, and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the chief executive officer, a trustee, five local governors, the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, three assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and the pastoral leaders.
- Deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of school documentation, including school policies, curriculum plans, the minutes of meetings of those responsible for governance and the school's summary of its self-evaluation.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 reviewed records of behaviour, including incidents of bullying. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed 158 responses, including 155 free-text responses, submitted to Ofsted Parent View during the inspection. Inspectors considered 66 responses to the staff survey and 222 responses to the pupil survey. Additionally, inspectors met with members of staff and spoke with pupils to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sufian Sadiq	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Dawes	Ofsted Inspector

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