

Inspection of St Josephs Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Aldrens Lane, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 2DU

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Rachael Griffiths. This school is part of the Mater Christi Multi-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), Jacky Kennedy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Murray.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this welcoming school where differences between people are valued and nurtured. Pupils feel loved and accepted. This helps them to feel safe and secure.

The school wants the best for pupils' achievement. However, in some subjects, this aim is not realised. Weaknesses in how well the curriculum is delivered in these subjects mean that some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not develop a deep body of knowledge over time. They do not achieve as well as they could.

Pupils generally behave well. They are kind to one another and most play cooperatively together. Pupils delight in the array of rewards that they receive for behaving well and working hard. However, staff have varied expectations of pupils' behaviour. At times, some pupils do not behave as well as they should.

Pupils are proud to care for their local and wider community. They learn that they can make a positive difference by raising money for charities. Pupils benefit from the opportunities that the school provides beyond the academic curriculum. For example, they spoke excitedly about visiting the seaside and attending clubs. This helps pupils to develop confidence and broaden their interests.

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

The school has developed an ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum in most subjects from the early years to the end of key stage 2. This means that staff know what pupils need to learn and when this should happen. Staff have benefited from some curriculum training in recent times. This is starting to help them to deliver the new subject curriculums more effectively. Nevertheless, some staff do not implement some new curriculums well. On occasion, the activities that some staff choose do not support pupils to deepen their knowledge as well as they could. This hinders pupils' achievement.

The school has improved its approaches for checking and evaluating the delivery of the curriculum. However, this work is in its infancy. This means that, at times, weaknesses in how well some staff deliver the curriculum, including in the early years, are not identified or addressed.

Some pupils have gaps in their knowledge as a result of weaknesses in the previous subject curriculum. The school has not put strategies in place to help staff to check what these pupils remember from previous learning. For some pupils, including those with SEND, learning does not build on what they know or address gaps in their knowledge. This means that, over time, some pupils do not acquire some of the knowledge that is expected by the school. In these subjects, their understanding of important concepts is superficial.

Recent changes to the early reading curriculum mean that pupils are starting to read with greater fluency and accuracy. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading. They enjoy choosing books from the new, well-stocked library. Typically, children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 read books that are well matched to their reading knowledge. Most staff have received training so that they know how to deliver the recently introduced early reading curriculum. Nevertheless, the school's chosen phonics programme, like other aspects of the curriculum, is not delivered consistently well. This hinders some pupils in becoming fluent readers as quickly as they should.

The school supports pupils' personal development well. Pupils understand how to manage their mental health and well-being. They know about the importance of getting enough sleep and staying hydrated, as well as eating a balanced diet. The school takes every opportunity to ensure that pupils respect diversity. Pupils understand that everyone is different and that there are many different types of families in society. They learn about important values such as respect, tolerance and democracy. These experiences prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Children in the early years enjoy playing and investigating in the well-equipped classrooms and outdoor areas. Children in the provision for two-year-olds settle in quickly. Staff help them to play cooperatively and to make new friends. However, at times, some children do not learn as well as they should. This is because some staff do not engage in conversations with children to build their knowledge and deepen their learning effectively.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. Typically, they respond enthusiastically to what is on offer. Even so, at times, some pupils do not behave as well as they should. Staff do not follow the approach to managing behaviour consistently well. The school is reviewing its actions to promote higher rates of attendance at school. This work is at an early stage. Many pupils are persistently absent from school. This means that they miss out on learning all that they should.

The trust has supported the school to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. There have been many changes in the school. However, the school pays close regard to the impact of these changes on staff's workload and well-being. The school considers how best to implement new initiatives without overburdening staff. Most staff feel valued and supported in 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 several subjects, pupils have gaps in their knowledge due to weaknesses in the previous curriculum. This makes it difficult for them to make connections when

they learn new content and results in a superficial understanding of some concepts. The school should ensure that staff are suitably equipped to use assessment strategies with confidence and accuracy, ensuring that gaps in pupils' learning are identified and addressed quickly.

- In many subjects, the school is not effective at evaluating the delivery and impact of the curriculum. This means that some weaknesses are not identified and acted on a timely manner. This hinders pupils' achievement in these subjects. The school should ensure that it gathers and evaluates monitoring information effectively so that it can quickly address any shortcomings in the implementation of subject curriculums.
- Many pupils are absent from school too often. This means that they miss important learning and have gaps in their knowledge. The school should ensure that it quickly and decisively reduces the rates of persistent absenteeism so that pupils attend school regularly and achieve well.
- The school's expectations for pupils' behaviour are not consistently high. In some lessons and subjects, some pupils do not display positive attitudes towards their learning. On occasion, this can interrupt other pupils' learning. The school should raise its expectations for pupils' behaviour and ensure that staff follow the agreed approaches consistently well.
- Some staff do not engage in high-quality interactions with children in the early years. This means that some children do not learn the key vocabulary that they need to deepen their learning. The school should train all staff to use their conversations with children to enhance 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.

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	148770
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10321478
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Murray
CEO of the trust	Jacky Kennedy
Headteacher	Rachael Griffiths
Website	www.stjosephslancaster.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust.
- St Josephs Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in September 2021. When its predecessor school, St Josephs Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- This Roman Catholic school is in the Diocese of Lancaster. The school's most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in October 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place from October 2028.
- A new headteacher has been appointed to the school. The headteacher took up post in September 2021.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school offers provision for two-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 the headteacher and senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with governors and trustees, including the chief executive officer. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 spoke with pupils in meetings and around the school at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also spoke with some parents and carers during the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to the online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Victoria Burnside, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kevin Simpson

Ofsted Inspector

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