

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

Knowle Close, Brixton, London SW9 0TQ

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 July 2024

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

St Helen's Catholic Primary School is welcoming and inclusive to all pupils. Parents and carers agree that the school is a warm, friendly and caring community for their children to learn in. Pupils eagerly come to school every day with a smile on their face.

Across the school there are high aspirations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils live up to these expectations and achieve highly in English and mathematics. By the time they leave the school, they are well prepared for secondary education.

Pupils generally behave well in lessons and on the playground. Pupils listen to their teachers and respond well to instructions. This begins in early years, where children learn to follow clear established routines. Any low-level disruption is dealt with swiftly by staff. Pupils show kindness and respect to adults and each other, and are polite and welcoming to visitors. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe in school. They know adults will help them when needed.

Pupils relish the range of roles and responsibilities they take on, such as school councillors, prayer leaders and travel ambassadors. Pupils value the opportunity to be role models and know they have a voice in the school.

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

The school has designed a broad and ambitious curriculum that develops pupils' curiosity about the world and their local area. In most subjects, the school has set out, carefully, the concepts and vocabulary pupils should learn. Learning is well sequenced, starting from early years, so pupils build on their knowledge over time. For example, in art and design, pupils develop a secure understanding of colour mixing. Older pupils apply this knowledge with confidence when creating their own pop art print work. In core subjects, such as mathematics and science, assessment is used well. Teachers ensure that pupils recall and remember what they have learned in the past. Staff identify any gaps in

learning and put in place effective support to swiftly remedy these. As a result, pupils build their knowledge securely over time and achieve well.

A few subjects are at an earlier stage of design and implementation. In these instances, the knowledge pupils need to secure is less well defined and teachers are sometimes less precise about what they want pupils to learn. As a result, some of the tasks and activities provided do not enable pupils to build their understanding of important ideas securely. The school recognise this and are currently developing the knowledge and expertise of middle leaders to check the implementation and impact of their subjects.

From the early years onwards, reading is a priority across the school. The school has worked to ensure that the teaching of phonics is effective. Staff are well trained to implement the agreed phonics programme from the start of the Reception year. Books are well matched to the sounds pupils are learning. Pupils who fall behind are quickly identified and provided with extra help and targeted interventions. This is effective in enabling pupils to catch up quickly. As a result, pupils develop into confident, accurate and fluent readers. Leaders have carefully considered the books that pupils read across the school. Regular reading in class helps pupils foster a love of books.

The school has developed a nurturing and inclusive environment. In early years, adults quickly get to know the needs of the children. The school swiftly identifies pupils with SEND, including those with a range of complex needs. Staff are well trained to ensure that all pupils receive the carefully tailored support they need, including through carefully adapted materials and extra resources. As a result, pupils with SEND are well supported and fully included in lessons alongside their peers. These pupils achieve well from their different starting points.

Behaviour in lessons and at social times is mostly positive. Pupils behave with respect and kindness. They understand right and wrong and are adamant that bullying is rare and swiftly dealt with. The school takes effective action to ensure that pupils attend regularly. As a result, attendance is high.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the wider opportunities they receive beyond the classroom. For example, the curriculum is enriched through a range of cultural visits, including to theatres, such as the Royal Opera House. There are also regular residentials to Grittleton House in the Cotswolds as well as a wide variety of sporting and musical experiences.

Governors provide effective challenge and support to the school. Staff appreciate the regular professional development on offer and recognise their workload is well considered and manageable.

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 few subjects, the school has not identified the precise knowledge and skills that pupils should learn. This means that activities in lessons do not consistently help pupils build their knowledge securely. The school needs to ensure that the content and sequencing of knowledge across the curriculum is clearly defined. The school should also ensure that the tasks provided to pupils match the ambition of the planned curriculum.
- Some parts of the curriculum are at an earlier stage of implementation. In these instances, there is some variability in how well pupils learn. The school should continue their work to embed and strengthen the curriculum. The school should also ensure that middle leaders receive the training and guidance they need to develop oversight of the subjects they manage.

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 July 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	100623
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	10323248
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	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Patricia Dafe
Headteacher	Adrian Le Cuirot
Website	https://www.st-helens.lambeth.sch.uk/contact-us/
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a Catholic religious character. The last section 48 inspection took place in March 2023, when it was judged to be good overall.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

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 that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, school business manager, other leaders and teachers. He spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, considered the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of school 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 views of pupils, parents and staff were gathered through discussions and by considering their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Sean Flood, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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