

Inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School

Fountains Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool, Merseyside L4 1UN

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 November 2024

The quality of education **Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Outstanding**

Early years provision **Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since January 2016. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act in June 2023. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school puts all pupils' learning at the heart of everything it does. Leaders, staff, parents, carers and pupils work exceptionally well together. The school's aim to 'live, love and learn together' is evident in all that it does. The ambitious, well-designed curriculum is implemented with consistency, care and rigour. Pupils thrive at this school. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils are happy and feel safe in school. It is a calm, well-ordered and supportive environment. Adults and pupils are kind to each other. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) feel that they belong. Differences are valued at this school. Pupils treat each other with understanding and respect.

An exciting range of cultural visits, such as to museums and galleries, help to inspire pupils. They are encouraged to join a wide range of clubs inside and outside school. Many pupils learn musical instruments and perform in concerts for the school and wider community. Sport is valued and the bulging trophy cabinet demonstrates pupils' success.

Pupils play a positive role in developing the school culture. They take on leadership roles, such as 'eco-warriors' and mental health ambassadors. Pupils are motivated to take on additional responsibilities, seeing them as a reward for effort.

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

It is leaders' passion and relentless focus on continual improvement that drives this school's success. The governing body is highly effective in maintaining the spotlight on pupils' excellent achievement. The school pinpoints what needs improving with precision. It ensures that everyone understands what to do and has the support to succeed. Relationships are exceptionally strong. Diversity, difference, patience and respect are intertwined in all that the school does.

The school's curriculum has an excellent focus on developing pupils' acquisition of language. It sets out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils need to learn from the Nursery class to Year 6. Staff's strong subject knowledge enables them to teach the curriculum exceptionally well. Particular attention is given to the teaching of mathematics. All pupils, from the early years onwards, are given time to practise and consolidate their mathematical knowledge. Staff check what pupils know and remember carefully before moving them to the next step. The school is ensuring that this exemplary approach to assessment is embedded across the curriculum.

Staff promote a love of reading as soon as children start at the school. Children in the Reception class, the Nursery class and the day care are immersed in sharing stories, singing songs and learning rhymes. They love their mathematics, language and phonics sessions. They make great strides in readiness for the next stage of their learning.

Early language screening programmes are used effectively. Children who need it receive tailored speech and language support, enabling them to make rapid progress in spoken English. Vocabulary learning is woven carefully through the whole curriculum. The children who attend both the day care and school's Nursery class benefit from the shared curriculum.

At the last inspection in June 2023, the teaching of phonics was identified as an area for improvement. Leaders have tackled this area rigorously. Staff are well trained to teach the phonics programme as intended, with high levels of consistency. Pupils practise reading daily using books that closely match the sounds they have learned. Staff monitor pupils' progress carefully and spotlight anyone who is at risk of falling behind in the phonics programme. Effective support is provided quickly to individuals and small groups. Pupils reaching the end of the phonics programme read with accuracy, fluency and confidence. Staff choose class books to read to pupils that enable them to empathise and gain a greater understanding of the world. They develop pupils' love of reading exceptionally well.

The school quickly identifies the individual needs of pupils with SEND. These pupils follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Staff provide excellent support where necessary. Pupils with SEND are encouraged to join in the wide array of clubs and activities. The school is understanding of the different individual needs of pupils and supports them exceptionally well.

The provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. Through the excellent curriculum, they open pupils' eyes to the world outside their local community. Residential visits and visitors to the school help pupils to develop confidence in their communication skills. Pupils develop a strong understanding of age-appropriate relationships, tolerance and equality. Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils are supported to join in clubs and hold roles of responsibility. These pupils feel valued by the school community.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Staff manage any pupils who have emotional problems effectively and with care to ensure that lessons are not disrupted. The attendance of most pupils is excellent. The school supports vulnerable pupils and their families well. Staff are relentless in their efforts to get the small minority of persistently absent pupils to attend regularly. They know the reasons for poor attendance and draw together all available support services to ensure that pupils are encouraged to attend school.

Staff appreciate the development opportunities available to them. They said that the school prioritises their workload, including when planning new initiatives. They are proud to work at the school, which is a beacon of excellence in the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	132796
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10337680
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	531
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanne McNeil
Headteacher	Denise Maudsley
Website	www.stjohnskirkdale.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has provision for two- and three-year-olds at St John's Day Nursery. It is managed by the governing body and based in Fountains Children's Centre.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection was carried out in December 2023. The next inspection is due in 2028.
- The school does not use any providers of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the archdiocese and the local authority. They also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, minutes from governors' meetings, self-evaluation documents and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 carried out deep dives in English, including early reading, mathematics, science and geography. They held discussions about the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at samples of work. They heard some pupils read to familiar staff.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey which was completed by older pupils in the school.

Inspection team

Gill Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Jackson	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Cooper	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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