

Saint Joseph's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy

Address: Philip Avenue, DN35 9DL

Unique reference number (URN): 138014

Inspection report: 9 December 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

⊗ This school requires significant improvement

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **significant improvement** because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Needs attention ●

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention ●

Pupils' attendance is below national averages, including for pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have identified the underlying reasons for pupils' absence. They work closely with families to provide support to increase attendance. Leaders analyse trends and patterns in attendance. They use this information to target support for the pupils who need it. However, leaders have only recently started this work. It is too soon to determine the impact.

The school has prioritised improving pupils' behaviour. Staff and pupils understand the behaviour system. Behaviour has improved recently. The school is calmer and more settled than it was. However, some disruption to learning does still occur. The school uses suspensions appropriately. A more structured approach to support pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour is beginning to have a positive impact. This is helping to reduce suspensions. Pupils and parents appreciate the weekly recognition assemblies that reward pupils' positive behaviour. This helps to improve pupils' attitudes towards learning. Bullying is rare at the school. When it happens, it is dealt with effectively.

Early years

Needs attention ●

Leaders have recently started work to improve the sequencing of knowledge in the early years curriculum. It is too early to see if these changes are securing the intended improvements in children's learning. Leaders have identified the knowledge that children will learn by the end of Reception. However, in some areas of learning other than reading and mathematics, this knowledge has not been organised in a logical order. Consequently, children do not progress as well as they could in these areas. The quality of interactions between staff and children is varied. These interactions do not support children to develop their language and vocabulary as well as they could.

In other areas of learning, such as early mathematics and phonics, children do learn a well-sequenced curriculum. They develop appropriate knowledge in phonics, writing and early mathematics. This is helping children to become increasingly prepared for Year 1.

Routines and expectations for behaviour and learning are in place but are not yet fully embedded. However, children, including those in Nursery, are settled and happy. Children

are kind and respectful to each other. The school is building positive relationships with parents and carers.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged is inconsistent. Some pupils benefit from effective support. Where this is the case, pupils can access the curriculum effectively. Where pupils do not receive effective support, this has a negative impact on their achievement. Some staff have not had appropriate training to support pupils who have barriers to their learning. As a result, some teachers do not routinely adapt activities to ensure that barriers to learning are overcome.

Leaders are determined to provide effective support for all pupils who need it. Their actions to achieve this are in the early stages of development. There have been recent improvements to the identification of pupils' needs and barriers to learning. Leaders are starting to communicate this information effectively to staff. However, leaders do not monitor the impact of interventions and support on pupils' progress.

The school identifies how it will use pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders do not evaluate the impact of these actions.

Leaders develop positive partnerships with families, professionals and external agencies. The school uses alternative provision appropriately.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The school has experienced significant turbulence in the past few years. This includes a number of changes in senior leadership and significant staff turnover. During this time, the trust has supported the school in the form of executive leadership and support for school improvement. This has shown some positive impact, for example published outcomes for key stage 2 pupils improved slightly in 2024. However, this improvement has not been sustained.

New leaders have identified and prioritised the right areas for improvement. Behaviour has improved. The school is calmer and more settled than it was before. Staff are more positive and optimistic for the future. Relationships with parents are more positive. Leaders are aware that there is more work to do, in particular with relation to improving the curriculum and raising pupils' achievement. There is an ambition to get this right in the near future.

The school has recently introduced opportunities to support staff development. This includes support for teachers to adapt learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Subject leaders have attended subject development networks with other trust schools. The impact of this work has not yet led to improvements in the curriculum, how well it is taught or pupils' achievement.

Those responsible for governance meet their statutory responsibilities. They have a realistic view of the school's effectiveness. Governors and trustees challenge and support school leaders appropriately. They are committed to the continued improvement of the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

Leaders have only recently started to take action to improve the school's personal development programme. The current programme does not account for mixed-age classes. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, such as democracy, tolerance and respect for difference, during assembly time. This learning is not reinforced across the curriculum. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, struggle to retain this knowledge and lack an understanding of its wider importance.

Pupils have limited opportunities to participate in wider enrichment activities and to develop their talents and interests. Leaders have plans in place to improve the enrichment offer and, in particular, to offer a range of trips to pupils in the future. The opportunities that do exist include visits from paramedics and the fire service in Reception and Nursery. This helps to develop children's understanding about people who help us.

Pupils take part in events for Anti-Bullying Week and an Advent retreat in preparation for Christmas. These activities help pupils to reflect on their beliefs and experiences and engage with ethical issues. Pupils learn a suitable relationships and sex education and health education programme. Pupils know why it is important to be kind to each other. They know how to stay safe online and in the community. Pupils know what bullying and discrimination are. They are confident that they would report any concerns about these issues to a trusted adult in school.

Urgent improvement

Achievement

Urgent improvement 

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, do not achieve as well as they should. This is reflected in their achievement in national tests and assessments. Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 is significantly below that of pupils nationally. This has been the case for a number of years. Pupils do not gain the knowledge they need to be ready for the next stage of their education. Work in pupils' books and pupils' recall of knowledge show significant gaps in their reading, writing and mathematical knowledge across all age groups. These gaps in knowledge impact negatively on how well pupils achieve in other subjects. Too many pupils leave the school without the knowledge needed to be ready for, and to learn successfully in, secondary school.

In a significant number of subjects, the curriculum lacks ambition, structure and coherence. In these subjects, leaders have not sequenced the knowledge that pupils will learn. As a result, pupils experience disjointed lessons that do not help them to learn important subject knowledge. In the subjects that have a well-sequenced curriculum, teachers do not routinely provide activities that are effective in supporting pupils' learning. This includes adapting teaching to meet the needs of some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some staff have not had the training they need to ensure that the curriculum is taught well. As a result, pupils' experiences in lessons do not help them to learn what leaders intend. Teachers do not consider what pupils already know and can do. Consequently, pupils regularly work through content that is too hard because they do not have the knowledge needed to learn and understand it. Teachers do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils do not get the support needed to catch up. This means that some pupils cannot access current learning. Leaders' actions to address the weaknesses in teaching are in the very early stages of development.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Significant turbulence over the past 3 years, including frequent changes in leadership and staffing, has had a negative impact on pupils' learning and achievement. However, more recent stability at the school means that pupils are supported to engage with their learning more effectively than they were.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should because they do not learn a high-quality curriculum. They do not receive effective teaching that helps them learn successfully. Pupils' achievement in national tests and assessments in Year 6 is significantly below that of pupils nationally and is declining. Pupils across the school have large gaps in their reading, writing and mathematical knowledge. The school does not do enough to help pupils fill these gaps in knowledge. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for their next stages of education. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is increasing. The support for pupils with SEND is inconsistent. Some pupils with SEND receive effective support to access the curriculum. For others, the curriculum is not adapted appropriately for their needs.

Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils enjoy mixing with their peers at social times and making new friends. The school has recently raised expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are increasingly meeting these expectations. Most of the time, the school is calm. However, some pupils sometimes disrupt the learning of others. Bullying is rare. When it does happen, it is dealt with effectively. Pupils feel safe at school.

Pupils have limited access to wider opportunities in school and in the community. Pupils would like more opportunities to take part in visits. Through the school's personal development programme, pupils learn about positive relationships and how to stay safe online.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers identify and address gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics to raise pupils' attainment.
 - Leaders should ensure that the knowledge that pupils should learn is sequenced and structured coherently in all subjects and taught effectively.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers consider pupils' prior knowledge when planning activities so that pupils build effectively on what they already know and can do.
 - Leaders should ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support to overcome their barriers to learning and make progress from their starting points so that they achieve as well as they should.
 - Leaders should continue their work to ensure that the early years curriculum identifies and sequences the key knowledge that children should learn in all areas of learning. Leaders should ensure that staff design activities that enable children to learn and remember the intended curriculum and develop further their speech and vocabulary.
 - Leaders, including those from the trust, should ensure that they build upon their recent actions to improve the school and lead to sustained improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
 - Leaders should continue to implement and evaluate their attendance strategy to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
 - Leaders should continue to develop the personal development curriculum to ensure an appropriate programme of personal development extends across the taught curriculum and wider opportunities and experiences.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Our Lady Of Lourdes Catholic 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), James McGeachie, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nigel Stevenson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the acting headteacher, the CEO and deputy CEO of the trust, a trustee and 2 members of the local governing body, including the chair, during the inspection.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school is part of the Diocese of Nottingham. The school last received a Diocesan Canonical Inspection Report in November 2018.

The school makes use of one alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. A new acting headteacher took up post at the end of September 2025.

At the time of the inspection, there were 59 pupils on roll.

Acting Headteacher : Michelle Steeper

Lead inspector:

Chris Sergeant, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Katie Hall, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 9 December 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

85

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

230

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

39.74%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

15.29%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

11.76%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	34%	61%	Below
2024/25	8%	62%	Below
2023/24	41%	61%	Below
2022/23	38%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	59%	74%	Below
2024/25	25%	75%	Below
2023/24	70%	74%	Close to average
2022/23	62%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	44%	72%	Below
2024/25	8%	72%	Below
2023/24	56%	72%	Below
2022/23	48%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	46%	73%	Below
2024/25	33%	74%	Below
2023/24	52%	73%	Below
2022/23	45%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	10%	46%	Below
2024/25	0%	47%	Below
2023/24	27%	46%	Below
2022/23	0%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	33%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	13%	63%	Below
2023/24	45%	62%	Below
2022/23	36%	60%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	20%	59%	Below
2024/25	0%	59%	Below
2023/24	45%	58%	Below
2022/23	9%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	27%	60%	Below
2024/25	25%	61%	Below
2023/24	36%	59%	Below
2022/23	18%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference

between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	10%	68%	-58 pp
2024/25	0%	69%	-69 pp
2023/24	27%	67%	-40 pp
2022/23	0%	66%	-66 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	33%	80%	-46 pp
2024/25	13%	81%	-68 pp
2023/24	45%	80%	-34 pp
2022/23	36%	78%	-42 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	20%	78%	-58 pp
2024/25	0%	78%	-78 pp
2023/24	45%	78%	-32 pp
2022/23	9%	77%	-68 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	27%	80%	-53 pp
2024/25	25%	81%	-56 pp
2023/24	36%	79%	-43 pp
2022/23	18%	79%	-61 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	6.3%	5.2%	Above
2023/24	6.7%	5.5%	Above
2022/23	5.9%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	22.2%	13.3%	Above
2023/24	15.8%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23	17.8%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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