

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Academy

Liverpool Road, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 5TF

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Mark O'Hagan. The school is part of the Pope Francis 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), Andrew Dawson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Isobel Macdonald-Davies.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are happy to be part of this very welcoming school community. Pupils from different backgrounds mix well with each other. Staff care for pupils' well-being and safety. Pupils know who to speak to if they are worried or upset.

The school is ambitious for all pupils to succeed, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are disadvantaged. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, benefit from the recent improvements that the school has made to the quality of education that it provides. However, pupils learn better in some lessons than in others. This is because the curriculum is not delivered consistently well. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has raised its expectations of how pupils should behave in school. Pupils behave well in lessons and as they move around the school during breaks and lunchtimes. Pupils appreciate how behaviour incidents are dealt with consistently and fairly by staff. However, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. These pupils do not benefit from the school's raised expectations.

An increasing number of pupils benefit from extra-curricular activities. The school asked pupils for suggestions about the sort of clubs they might wish to join. As a result, there are now more opportunities than before for pupils to participate in a wide variety of sports, musical and cultural activities.

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

The staff, governors and trustees at this school are united and effective in their desire to ensure that all pupils have access to a high-quality, broad and ambitious curriculum. The school, with the support of the trust, has begun to take effective action to address a legacy of an inadequate curriculum and poor teaching. As a result, outcomes for all pupils are now improving.

The school has considered carefully what pupils need to know and when this content should be taught. Each subject curriculum, including those taught in the sixth form, sets out clearly for staff the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn. Subject teachers have received training on how best to deliver that knowledge. Consequently, the quality of education currently provided by the school is improving.

Teachers know their subjects well. In many lessons, they provide clear explanations and check regularly that pupils understand what is being taught. However, in other lessons, there is variation in the way the curriculum is delivered. Sometimes, teachers do not choose the most appropriate methods to help pupils to understand key knowledge. On some occasions, teachers do not check carefully that pupils understand what they have learned before introducing new learning. As a result, some pupils develop gaps in their learning. They struggle to recall what has been taught and learning is hindered.

The school identifies pupils with SEND accurately and meets their needs well. Together with the trust, the school has provided teachers with suitable information and training on how to support pupils with SEND in the classroom. Consequently, staff are increasingly confident in helping these pupils to learn well. However, the achievement of pupils with SEND in key stage 4 is variable. This is because they have experienced the same legacy of a weak curriculum and poor teaching as their peers.

The school has made reading a priority. It has developed effective systems to identify pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. These systems enable staff to pinpoint and remedy the specific problems that individual pupils face with reading. Most pupils become more confident readers over time. This is making it easier for them to access the ambitious school curriculum.

Pupils benefit from positive relationships with staff and their peers. Typically, they behave well and enjoy learning and socialising together. They understand and follow routines. Older pupils told inspectors that there is a stark contrast between pupils' current behaviour and that in times past.

The school has appropriate processes in place to understand and address the causes of pupils' absence. The school works thoughtfully with many pupils and their families to improve pupils' rates of attendance. However, these strategies are not effective for a small group of pupils. These pupils do not attend school as often as they should and, consequently, do not achieve well.

The school shows a strong commitment to ensuring that pupils, and students in the sixth form, build the knowledge that they need to be well prepared for life beyond school. The personal, social and health education programme has been recently reviewed. The changes ensure that pupils have time to discuss and reflect on more sensitive issues including relationships, sex and health matters. All pupils receive age-appropriate careers education, including independent advice about future careers and further and higher education opportunities.

The school is considerate of staff's workload and well-being. The trust has supported the school to strengthen its capacity for improvement. Members of the local governing body support and challenge school leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Across all subjects, the renewed curriculum is in its early stages of implementation. As a result, in some lessons, teachers do not choose the most suitable techniques to help pupils to understand subject content. This hinders how well pupils progress through the curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers are fully equipped to deliver curriculum content consistently well so that pupils know and remember important knowledge.
- Across all subjects, in some lessons teachers do not check pupils' understanding well enough. This means that some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, develop gaps in their knowledge and misconceptions that go unchecked. The school should ensure that teachers are supported to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. This is so that pupils can build on what they know when new learning is introduced.
- Some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school as regularly as they should. These pupils are not accessing the full curriculum and they miss out on important learning. The school should further develop its strategies to work constructively with parents and carers to overcome the barriers to attendance, which, at present, stop some pupils from making the most of their education.

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	149047
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10348394
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	661
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Isobel Macdonald-Davies
CEO of the trust	Andrew Dawson
Headteacher	Mark O'Hagan
Website	www.sacredheartcatholicacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Sacred Heart Catholic Academy converted to become an academy school in June 2022. When its predecessor school, Sacred Heart Catholic School, was last inspected in October 2021, it was judged to be inadequate.
- The school is part of the Pope Francis Multi Academy Trust. It joined this trust in June 2022.
- Sacred Heart Catholic Academy is a faith school. It is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The school's previous section 48 inspection took place in October 2024.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

- The school makes use of seven registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- All students in the sixth form are currently in Year 13.

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 senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust and trustees.
- An inspector spoke to representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's improvement plans, records of governing body meetings and analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took into account 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, art and design, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and visited some lessons in those subjects.
- Inspectors also visited a number of other lessons in other subjects in the sixth form.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

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Paul Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Yarwood	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector

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