

Inspection of a good school: St Alban's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Newstead Avenue, Chaddesden, Derby, Derbyshire DE21 6NU

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

St Alban's Catholic Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Alban's is a happy and welcoming place. Pupils embrace the school's motto of 'learning, loving and living'. They are well cared for and are proud of their school. Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

There are several leadership roles that pupils can benefit from taking on. These include being a member of the school council, the eco group, the chaplaincy team or being an anti-bullying ambassador. Pupils take pride in these roles. A common view expressed by pupils is that these roles enable them 'to make the school the best it can be'.

Staff have high standards and pupils live up to them. Leaders have worked hard to create a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils support and encourage each other in class. They behave well in lessons and around the school.

Pupils are happy and safe. They say that bullying is very rare. Pupils trust staff to resolve incidents quickly.

Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school. One parent, typical of many, said: 'I commend the school on their approach to supporting pupils and families, their unwavering commitment to teaching and the loving environment they provide for their pupils.'

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

The quality of education remains good at St Alban's Catholic Voluntary Academy. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. In most subjects, leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Subject leaders have ensured that the curriculum is sequenced so that new learning builds on what pupils already know. Pupils know and remember more in these subjects. In some foundation subjects,

however, leaders have only recently mapped out the key knowledge pupils need to learn. This is now starting to have the necessary impact.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and a passion for what they teach. Activities are well considered. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding frequently. This information helps teachers to identify where pupils might have gaps in their knowledge. They use it to inform their planning. However, assessment procedures are not fully embedded or consistent across all subjects.

Leaders have recently adopted a new early reading programme. Staff have received training to help them understand how to deliver it. There is a consistent approach, starting with children in the early years. Pupils receive reading books that are well matched to their reading development. Frequent and accurate assessments mean that pupils who might fall behind are easily spotted and supported.

Teachers are quick to identify pupils with SEND. They routinely assess pupils and check that these pupils receive the full curriculum. Teachers think carefully about how they deliver the curriculum for pupils with SEND. This means that these pupils achieve well.

Leaders provide children in early years classes with well-resourced indoor and outdoor classrooms. Teachers plan activities that fully support children's personal, social and emotional development. The early years staff clearly understand the important knowledge they want children to remember. Teachers provide children with rich opportunities to develop early literacy and mathematics. For example, children learn about early number through counting the children and the remaining spare places on a make-believe bus.

Pupils are friendly and polite to visitors. They behave well in lessons and work hard. This has not happened by accident. Teachers talk intelligently to pupils about behaviour. Pupils show genuine respect and support for one another.

There is a strong focus on pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to be caring, active and responsible citizens. Leaders know that it is important to develop pupils' character. Pupils learn to respect and celebrate differences in others. They have a secure and confident understanding of fundamental British values and the protected characteristics. Pupils know why these are important. They take part in projects and charity fundraising. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff are united in providing the best opportunities and experiences for every pupil. For example, some children recently took part in Young Voices and some visited the Holocaust Centre.

The school is well led. Leaders put pupils at the centre of everything they do. Staff are reflective and thoughtful about their work. They support each other well. Leaders consider staff's workload and well-being. Staff feel happy and well supported. Parents hold the school in high regard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils and their families very well. They provide strong support to vulnerable pupils. Leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, and effective systems are in place to keep pupils safe, including a weekly priority pupil meeting. Leaders take prompt action in response to any concerns. Staff receive regular and appropriate training. Records are well maintained.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment of the curriculum is not yet fully embedded throughout the school. In some subjects, assessment systems are still at early stages of implementation. Leaders should establish a clear structure for the assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding to ensure that misconceptions are identified and to inform future planning. Leaders need to monitor the implementation of this, making adjustments as necessary to assure themselves that all groups of pupils are achieving as well as they can.

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 predecessor school, St Albans Catholic Primary School, to be good in September 2013.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146253
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10254882
Type of school	Infant/Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	348
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
Headteacher	Tim Brogan
Website	www.stalbans.srscmat.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at pupils' books for science, history and geography. The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1 and 2 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector considered the range of documents that the school keeps with regard to safeguarding. She spoke with pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspector met with governors and members of the board of trustees.

- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils and staff. The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Dawn Ashbolt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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