

Inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy

Priory Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 3HJ

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 February 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Teresa Cooke. This school is part of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic 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), Mark Mountcastle, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Kalnins.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Alban's Catholic Primary School a Voluntary Academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Alban's Catholic Primary School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as St Alban's Catholic Primary School a Voluntary Academy as a result of conversion to academy status. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy being part of this caring and welcoming school. They know that staff care about them as individuals. The school makes sure pupils are safe and feel secure.

The school has high ambitions for pupils' academic achievement. Most pupils meet the school's expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in some other subjects, pupils do not learn all that they should.

Pupils behave typically well during lessons. Classrooms are purposeful. Pupils trust that staff will help them with any worries or concerns that they may have. They are delighted that their achievements do not go unnoticed by the staff. Pupils strive to be the best that they can be. They are polite, respectful and well-mannered.

Pupils are proud of the positive contributions that they make to the school. For example, pupils in the gardening and 'go green' groups have raised money for recycling and growing activities. Pupils have identified charities to support that are close to their hearts. They want to help the world and make a difference. Pupils benefit from trips locally and further afield that widen their horizons. They enjoy the residential that help to build their independence.

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

The school provides a broad and ambitious curriculum. Staff have secure subject knowledge and deliver the curriculum in an engaging way. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve in line with national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. In other parts of the curriculum, some subjects are not as well embedded. For a couple of subjects, the school has not clearly defined the most important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn. This limits the depth in which pupils learn. In addition, some subject leaders are at an early stage of overseeing the implementation and impact of the curriculum in their subjects.

The school's reading curriculum ensures that pupils experience high-quality texts from the early years to Year 6. Teachers use regular assessments to identify any pupils who require further support. These pupils get the help that they need to catch up quickly. The school matches reading books carefully to the sounds that pupils know. It has trained all staff in the phonics scheme. However, sometimes the teaching of phonics and early writing lacks precision and is not delivered consistently well. This means that some pupils are not fully confident in remembering sounds and letters and using these in their reading and early letter formation. As a result, some do not learn how to write fluently and form letters as well as they should.

In some curriculum areas, such as phonics and mathematics, teachers carefully check what pupils know. However, in other subjects, the school does not check sufficiently what pupils have learned and remembered over time. This means that often gaps in learning

are not addressed and learning moves on before pupils have secured the knowledge they need.

Children in the early years have a positive start to their school journey. Effective transition arrangements ensure children settle into school typically well. Children enjoy exploring different themes in their book of the week. Well-planned activities help children to develop important skills and knowledge. For example, children develop their fine motor skills when making animal homes and bird feeders based on their latest class book.

Skilled staff quickly identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils benefit from well-targeted adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum. This enables them to follow the school's curriculum successfully.

From early years onwards, pupils learn to follow clear routines. This helps to make the school a settled and focused learning environment. Attendance rates are high. Where necessary, the school provides appropriate support and encouragement to successfully reduce absence.

The programme to support pupils' personal development prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn to become responsible young people. They value the many differences between themselves and others. Pupils relish opportunities to develop their leadership skills. For example, older pupils act as buddies, prefects and play leaders. In these roles, they foster a family approach across school. Pupils are humble in the way that they share their talents with others in school, showing great maturity.

Most staff believe that the school considers their workload and well-being well. They appreciate how their time is allocated outside of the classroom for aspects of their roles. The governing body and trust work well with the school. They provide support and challenge, with a shared focus on continuing to improve the quality of education that the school provides for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders do not have a clear oversight of curriculum effectiveness. This means that they do not know if the curriculum is having the intended impact and what changes are needed to improve the curriculum. The school should ensure that subject leaders have the skills and knowledge to oversee their subject areas effectively.
- There is some variability in curriculum implementation. This includes approaches to checking pupils' learning and opportunities for pupils to recap and practise prior learning. Where this is the case, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The

school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well across subjects.

- In some subjects, the school is not clear about the most important knowledge that pupils should learn. This means that some pupils do not learn to the depth that they should. The school should ensure that, in these subjects, the most important knowledge is identified so that pupils can deepen their understanding of these subjects over time.
- There are inconsistencies in how early reading and letter formation are taught, even though the school has a systematic and well-planned approach to early reading and writing, including phonics. This means that some pupils do not secure the key knowledge they need to become confident readers and writers. The school should ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge to implement the phonics programme consistently well.

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	141811
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10348315
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	302
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Kalnins
CEO of the trust	Mark Mountcastle
Headteacher	Teresa Cooke
Website	www.stalbansprimarymacclesfield.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 November 2014

Information about this school

- This Catholic school is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in November 2021. The school's next section 48 inspection is due before November 2026.
- The school runs a before- and after- school club for pupils.
- This school uses one alternative provision for its 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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and art and design. They met with subject leaders and with teachers. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects. They met with leaders, spoke with pupils and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the local governing body and the trust. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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