

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Bernard's Roman Catholic Primary School

Sherbourne Road, Ellesmere Port, Merseyside CH65 5EW

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 March 2025

Outcome

St Bernard's Roman Catholic Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The head of school is Julie Le Feuvre. This school is part of the Holy Family 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), Andrew Moor, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Simpson. There is also an executive headteacher, Steve Jevons, who is responsible for this school and four others.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Bernard's is a place where pupils are happy and excited about learning. Staff foster warm and positive relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to feel safe and well supported. Pupils are eager to embrace the school's vision of 'excellence in all we do'. They behave well. Pupils are accepting of differences between people.

The school holds high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils display positive attitudes towards learning. They actively support each other in tasks. Most pupils, including children in the early years, achieve well across a wide range of subjects.

The school provides an impressive array of activities that build pupils' character and broaden their experiences. For example, residential outdoor trips enhance their teamworking skills. Memorable visits, including to museums and art galleries, bring the curriculum to life for pupils. Pupils take great pride in representing the school in local drama productions. They also enjoy competing in sports tournaments. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities to participate in clubs, such as calm creative club, basketball and cookery.

Pupils play an active role in the life of the school. Members of the school parliament have helped to introduce bicycles for playtime, promoted recycling and reduced litter. These responsibilities contribute to developing pupils' confidence and sense of community.

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

The school has ensured that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. With the support of the trust, it has made improvements to some subject curriculums in recent years. The school has identified clearly the subject knowledge that pupils need to learn each year and the order in which they should learn it. This is set out from the early years to Year 6.

Staff have a secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They use a variety of resources effectively to enhance pupils' learning. In most subjects, staff check pupils' learning and address any misconceptions that pupils may have. However, there are times in few subjects, when the information gained from these checks is not used as effectively as it could be to address gaps in what pupils know. This makes it harder for some pupils to learn new material.

Children in the Nursery class are cared for well. This helps them to feel settled and secure. They have many opportunities to develop their social skills. They enjoy listening to stories. Staff model spoken language well. This helps them to make a confident start in the Reception class, where they start to learn phonics.

Reading is a high priority. The school has improved the design and delivery of the phonics programme. The books that pupils read help them to practise the sounds they are learning. Highly trained staff provide well-targeted support for children and pupils who struggle to read. This helps them to catch up. Pupils enjoy reading books across a variety of genres in and out of school. As a result, pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are promptly identified. These pupils have access to the same opportunities as their peers. Most staff use information about pupils with SEND to adapt the delivery of the curriculum well. This helps many of these pupils to progress well through the curriculum.

Pupils rise to the school's high expectations of behaviour. They are kind to each other. In class, they concentrate well. Pupils who find it challenging to manage their emotions receive effective support to help them re-engage with their learning. Pupils play cheerfully with their friends in the playground during breaktimes. The school rigorously monitors pupil absence and identifies the reason for absences. It has implemented effective strategies, including new rewards, to encourage better attendance. As a result, attendance has improved, with most pupils attending regularly.

Pupils' personal development is promoted effectively. They become responsible citizens who contribute greatly to the community. For example, they raise money for local charities and collect food for homeless shelters. Pupils take part in projects with a local zoo, including as zoo rangers where they speak to members of the public. Pupils enjoy learning about other religions and faiths. This helps them to develop tolerance and

understanding of others. Employer visits to the school and careers fairs help to raise pupils' aspirations for the future.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They recognise that the school is mindful of their workload and well-being. Staff appreciate the time they are given to complete additional tasks. Local governors and trustees are highly supportive of the school and provide constructive challenge. They know what the school does well and are working with the school to address areas that need improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, in a few subjects, the strategies for checking pupils' knowledge are not used as well as they could be to support pupils' learning. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that the information gathered from checks on learning is used effectively to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge before introducing new content.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

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	140896
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10378010
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Simpson
CEO of the trust	Andrew Moor
Headteacher	Julie Le Feuvre (Head of School) Stephen Jevons (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.stbernardsrc.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Catholic primary school in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2024. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place in the 2028/29 academic year.
- The school is part of the Holy Family Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.
- Since the last inspection, a new executive headteacher, head of school and chair of trustees have been appointed.
- The school opened a Nursery in 2023. It is for children from the age of two years upwards.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the executive headteacher, head of school, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The inspector spoke with the CEO and members of the local governing body and trust board. He also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and with a representative of the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. He also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector spoke with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at break and lunchtime. He also took account of the views expressed by pupils in Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector met with groups of staff and considered the opinions expressed through the Ofsted staff survey.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed by parents and carers through Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. He also spoke with some parents.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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