

Inspection of St James Catholic Primary School

Leach Heath Lane, Rednal, Birmingham, West Midlands B45 9BN

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Matthew Ingram. This school is part of Lumen Christi Catholic Multi Academy Company, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul Collins-Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Vince.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St James Catholic Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St James Catholic Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils spoken to said how much they enjoy school. Leaders look after them very well, so they feel safe. The ethos of the school is rooted in its values. Pupils are at the heart of their school prayer, 'let your light shine'. Pupils are proud of having 'prayer partners'.

Leaders are very ambitious for all pupils to do as well as they can, regardless of background or starting points. As a result, pupils achieve very highly, including in reading. Pupils who find learning difficult or who have challenges to overcome are fully involved in lessons and the wider life of the school. All pupils can access trips, such as to the zoo or the Lickey Hills.

In addition to their regular lessons, which include Latin, pupils benefit from a 'breakout' curriculum. Here they can learn to dance, cook and sew, as well as design and make working models such as windmills, boats and rockets.

Pupils behave very well. They take on responsibilities such as serving food to younger ones at lunchtime and clearing away plates at the end. Pupils reported that bullying is exceptionally rare. Any incident that does occur is dealt with swiftly and effectively by leaders.

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

Leaders have designed and put in place a curriculum plan from Reception to Year 6 which is very well sequenced. All units in each subject interlink and build on previous learning. There are also strong links across subjects, for example aspects of design and technology are taught through science or computing.

Teachers and additional adults are very well trained to deliver the curriculum. They have excellent subject knowledge. Where there are two or more adults in a class, they interact very well with each other to effectively support pupils' learning.

From Reception onwards, all adults are involved in checking pupils' learning and addressing misconceptions. Through highly effective and targeted questioning, they establish whether pupils understand concepts and the meaning of key words. 'Prior learning' activities at the start of each lesson are used very well by teachers to help pupils recall previous information.

Teachers are very skilled at making adaptations to pupils' work. This ensures that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are able to access the same learning as their peers at an appropriate level of challenge. This includes additional resources, such as word banks, visual clues or additional support where pupils can hear texts read aloud.

Leaders get pupils reading very early on in Reception. All adults are consistent in the application of the phonics scheme. Leaders have put in place appropriate additional

support in reading for those at an early stage of learning and those who have fallen behind. This helps pupils to quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to become confident, fluent readers. As a result, almost all reach the expected standard in reading in Years 1 and 2. By Year 6 standards in reading are very high for all pupils. Disadvantaged pupils also make rapid progress in reading.

Pupils also do exceptionally well in mathematics by the time they leave school. In the early years, all mathematical activities, whether structured or unstructured, follow the theme of learning to count.

In each subject, pupils make very rapid gains in their learning. For example, in history they can recall information about their study of castles in Reception. Adults present technical and subject vocabulary very well. This starts right from Reception where children understand the concept of King John being a 'tyrant'. They can also recall details of the painters they have studied in art.

Pupils engage very well in their learning. They attend school very regularly. They have very positive relationships with adults and each other. Pupils show high levels of respect for those from different backgrounds or beliefs.

The curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' wider development. In English, for example, pupils have performed poems that they have written themselves at the Birmingham Hippodrome. Pupils are developed to be responsible citizens. They are able to suggest ideas for clubs, which they then run themselves. Pupils can be sports leaders. They also understand about issues in the local community. They have supported the parish in fundraising for food. During refugee week they learned about sanctuary.

Leaders and governors are very mindful of staff's workload. This is much appreciated by all of the staff who responded. In the parents survey 100% of the large number who replied said they would recommend the school to another parent. Governors know the school very well, including what it does well and its priorities for the future.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	141820
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10256867
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	208
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Vince
Principal	Matthew Ingram
Website	www.stjamescatholicprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The predecessor school was last inspected in 2009.
- The school became part of Lumen Christi Catholic Multi Academy Company in 2015.
- The current principal was appointed in April 2023 and the vice principal in September 2023.
- The chair of the governing body has been in post for three years.
- The school received its last section 48 inspection in May 2019 when it was judged outstanding. The next inspection, which was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, is due in 2024/2025.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 held meetings with the principal, vice principal and other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke to several groups of pupils.
- Inspectors met four members of the school's standard committee, which is the governing body for the school. Members present included the acting chair.
- Inspectors spoke to the chief executive officer and the head of standards of the trust.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View free-text service, the online questionnaire, and the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also listened to pupils reading. They also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, including in the early years foundation stage.
- 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.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Bates

Ofsted Inspector

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