

Inspection of St John Wall Catholic School

Oxhill Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 8HH

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils blossom at this unique and caring school. Staff and pupils live and breathe the school values. Leaders expect pupils to work hard and strive academically. Pupils rise to this challenge. Everyone is welcome and staff and pupils care for and look out for each other. Pupils summed this up, telling inspectors that the school is 'like a family' and that 'everyone just gets along'.

All staff expect pupils to be attentive, compassionate and curious. Pupils reflect these expectations in their behaviour and attitudes. Staff teach pupils how to behave and model the trust and mutual respect that all are expected to show. Classrooms are places where teachers teach, and pupils learn. If pupils struggle to maintain the standards expected, staff support them with empathy and care. This means that pupils can put right what has gone wrong.

Nobody tolerates unkindness, discrimination or bullying of any form. Instead, difference is valued, nurtured and celebrated. This fosters a happy, safe and harmonious school culture. If pupils do raise a concern about bullying, staff act swiftly and effectively to resolve any issues. The range of clubs, trips and visits broaden pupils' horizons and ready them for life beyond school. These range from trips to the seaside to cultural heritage days.

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

The school is led with grace, determination and vision. Governors, leaders and staff put the best interests of pupils at the heart of what they do. Staff feel supported to grow professionally and challenged to continually improve. They work together closely, and leaders provide purposeful ongoing professional development. Leaders ensure that the well-being of staff is paramount. They bear staff workload in mind when making decisions. Staff know leaders value and appreciate their efforts.

In most subjects, leaders have devised ambitious curriculums. They have thought carefully about what pupils will learn and when they will learn it. Pupils use what they have learned before to help them with new learning. This helps them to connect their knowledge across topics and themes and develop a secure understanding of each subject. However, in a few instances, leaders have not ensured that teachers know precisely how new knowledge draws on what pupils have learned before.

Pupils gain the qualifications needed for future study, employment or training. They choose from a broad range of subjects at key stage 4. In Year 9, most pupils study either geography or history. They can also choose from a range of modern foreign languages. However, many pupils do not continue to learn both a humanity subject and a modern foreign language beyond Year 8. This means that not enough pupils currently go on to gain the qualifications that make up the EBacc. Leaders plan to address this so that the EBacc sits at the heart of the curriculum.

Teachers deliver the curriculum well. They present new subject matter clearly and reshape their explanations when needed. Leaders use teachers' ongoing assessment of pupils' learning alongside information from tests to further develop the curriculum. This is highly effective.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They identify pupils who have gaps in their phonic knowledge. Expert staff then help pupils to improve and catch up. More widely, reading sits at the core of the school. Pupils read aloud in lessons confidently and routinely. Many read for pleasure and staff use reading to extend pupils' knowledge of the world.

Leaders want the very best for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders identify pupils' needs accurately and share important information with staff. Staff use this to adjust their practice. This means that pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Many pupils speak English as an additional language. Leaders have thought carefully about the needs of these pupils, especially if they are new to the country. Leaders have developed a coherent support programme. This helps pupils to become part of the school and local community and helps to develop their language. Leaders are rightly proud of this provision.

Leaders have worked successfully to improve pupils' punctuality and attendance. They leave no stone unturned. Staff celebrate when pupils attend well and look to understand and support when pupils' attendance becomes a concern.

Leaders work to enhance pupils' wider development is of a high quality. Pupils learn about a wide range of issues through the 'lifestyle' curriculum, form time, weekly worship and 'values' days. These are supplemented by a wide range of trips and visits. Pupils benefit from excellent careers advice and guidance. All this reinforces the school values and helps pupils to navigate the challenge of being a young adult in modern Britain. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities in school and undertake these diligently.

Leaders use the funding for disadvantaged pupils creatively and effectively. They have a clear strategy in place that they constantly review and evaluate. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Many also participate in and benefit from the wide range of opportunities available to them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Staff are vigilant and are alert to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff are well trained, and report concerns promptly, no matter how trivial they may appear to be. Leaders take swift action to make sure that pupils get the help and support they need.

Leaders have made sure that pupils know what to do if they are worried about themselves or one of their friends. Pupils learn about the risks outside school and get the information they need to keep themselves safe. Leaders encourage pupils to talk to a 'safe person' in school rather than holding on to any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not yet ensured that the suite of qualifications that forms the EBacc sits at the heart of the school curriculum. This means that many pupils do not study either geography or history and a modern foreign language beyond the end of Year 8. Leaders should ensure that they enact their plans so that all pupils continue to study both a humanity subject and a modern foreign language in Year 9, so that a greater proportion of pupils then go on to study a combination of subjects at key stage 4 that make up the EBacc.
- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum precisely sets out the prior knowledge that pupils need to draw on, and the new knowledge that they need to learn. This means that, in a few instances, it is unclear what previous learning pupils should be building on to help with their new learning and what key knowledge needs to be secured. Leaders should ensure that all teachers know how each part of the curriculum fits with what has already been learned, so that pupils can secure a good depth of knowledge in each subject.

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	103534
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10241991
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	658
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing	Martin Jones
Headteacher	Katherine Marston
Website	www.sjw.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three registered alternative provision settings.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has a Catholic ethos.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in November 2017. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, including the SEND coordinator.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the local governing body, the diocese and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, science, modern foreign languages, history, and art and design. 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 reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities, enrichment programme and personal development programme with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a pupil survey, a staff survey and Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with safeguarding leaders.

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Natasha Lloyd	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
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