

Inspection of St Mark's Catholic Primary School

Almond Croft, Old Walsall Road, Great Barr, Birmingham, West Midlands B42 1NU

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

The principal of this school is Danielle Linley. This school is part of The St John Bosco Catholic Academy, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Helen Parkes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Phillip Hancox.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff, pupils, parents and carers are proud members of a vibrant and caring school community. Pupils see school as a happy and safe place. They enjoy coming to school each morning and therefore attend well. Everyone welcomes each other at the start of each new school day and looks forward to learning and growing together.

Staff expect pupils to work hard and achieve well. Pupils do their best, listening attentively and working together to meet their teachers' expectations. They are polite, kind and diligent and know how they should behave in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. The playground buzzes with excited chatter and play. Classrooms are calm, orderly and purposeful. The school has introduced the 'St Mark's way' so that pupils are clear what is expected of them. They have risen to this challenge, following clear routines so that all can learn.

The school puts pupils' personal development at the front and centre of its work. This promotes pupils' understanding of their local, national and global community. Pupils learn about the impact of pollution in distant countries and the impact of poverty on people in their city. In addition, pupils take advantage of the ample opportunities to develop their own talents and interests, from displaying their art at local exhibitions to Taekwondo, drama and dance.

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

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. In each subject, it has identified the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers know what pupils have already learned and the knowledge that is critical for future learning. The early years curriculum is crafted to give children a good start to their education. It connects to the key stage one curriculum seamlessly and sets pupils up to succeed.

In the main, staff deliver the curriculum effectively so that pupils learn well. They select resources carefully. Pupils develop their understanding and complete relevant and sufficient practice so that they remember the learning. However, in some instances, teachers do not notice if individual pupils find the learning difficult, have made errors or are ready for the next challenge. This means that sometimes teachers do not make the adjustments needed to ensure that all pupils learn well.

The school has put reading at its heart. Pupils read and listen to a wide range of texts across genres, from non-fiction to poetry and prose. Pupils particularly enjoy being read to each day as part of the 'reading for pleasure' programme. Children begin to learn to read soon after starting in the early years. They develop their phonics knowledge quickly and learn how to read and write. As they move into Year 1, pupils continue to grow in confidence as young readers, reading books that match their phonics knowledge. Skilled staff identify when pupils are falling behind and act quickly to help them catch up and keep up.

The school identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Information about their needs is shared with staff and the strategies and targets for individual pupils are, in the main, clear and appropriate. This helps most pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers and go on to achieve well.

Many pupils speak English as an additional language. This is not seen as a barrier to learning. Instead, beginning in the early years, the school has considered carefully how all children develop their vocabulary and communication skills. The school celebrates the diversity and cultures that make up its community. Learning about different cultures, faiths and traditions brings a richness to school life.

The school has constructed a coherent and high-quality personal development programme for pupils. This begins in early years and runs through to Year 6. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They develop a moral compass based on mutual respect, kindness and compassion. Pupils contribute to their school and local community in many ways. They work with local refugee and asylum seeker groups, run bingo sessions for the elderly and act as junior police community support officers.

Governors and trust leaders know what the school does well and where it needs to get better. They provide the supportive accountability needed. Trust support is deployed wisely and is helping the school to improve areas of weakness. However, the school does not monitor or evaluate the impact of its actions rigorously. This means that follow-up actions sometimes lack precision and do not focus on the areas that will make the greatest difference.

Staff say that the school is 'like a family' and their efforts never go unnoticed. Staff workload, well-being and professional development are always considered. All staff are unequivocally positive about the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that staff use assessment effectively, to check pupils' understanding, identify misconceptions and deepen their thinking. This means that, sometimes, teachers do not take the necessary steps to reshape explanations and tasks to move all pupils' learning forward. The school should ensure that all teachers have the pedagogical expertise to respond to individual pupils' learning needs, including those with SEND, so that they all learn the curriculum well.
- The school does not monitor or evaluate the impact of its work to improve the quality of education consistently well. This means that the school's subsequent actions sometimes lack precision and do not lead to the rapid improvement that the school is

aiming to achieve. The school and trust should ensure that monitoring leads to specific and detailed actions, and that the impact is evaluated rigorously to inform a cycle of continuous improvement.

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	148973
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10294731
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	209
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phillip Hancox
CEO of the trust	Helen Parkes
Principal	Danielle Linley
Website	www.stmarkrc.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the first full graded inspection since the school converted to an academy in June 2022.
- The school is part of the St John Bosco Catholic Academy. It is one of eight schools in the trust.
- This Roman Catholic school is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The last section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in October 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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 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 held discussions with the principal and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the board of trustees and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, physical education, mathematics and history. 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 also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 formally and informally at various points in the inspection to gather general information about school life. They took account of responses to a staff survey and Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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

Ian Tustian, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Steph Withington

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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