Inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Lensfield Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB2 1EN

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 May 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Jenny McGhee Wallace and the head of school is Christopher Wright. This school is part of Our Lady of Walsingham 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), Flavio Vettese, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Bergin.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Alban's Catholic Primary School 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 an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Albans Primary Catholic School's motto, 'Believe, Achieve and Succeed', reflects the high expectations set for all pupils. Pupils understand the importance of education for their futures. They are motivated to learn, feel happy at school and are kept safe. Relationships between staff, pupils and parents and carers are positive.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. It ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the curriculum effectively. Pupils enjoy the wide range of varied learning opportunities that the curriculum provides. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' character. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and life beyond primary school.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. They are respectful and play well together. Older pupils show kindness towards younger pupils. In lessons, pupils concentrate and meet staff expectations. Learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils take pride in roles such as chaplains, tour guides and reading buddies. Pupils benefit from a wide range of educational visits, such as to a local science laboratory and to historical buildings. Pupils attend residentials where they build their independence and determination.

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

With support from the diocese and the trust, the school has ensured that the interesting curriculum helps to develop pupils' curiosity. Essential knowledge and key vocabulary have been carefully considered. In lessons, teachers introduce new content that is designed to build on what pupils have learned before. Appropriate activities are usually used to help pupils to learn the curriculum content well. Occasionally, the activities selected do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to build on and extend and deepen their learning. This means that sometimes pupils do not learn all they could.

The school has a strong commitment to offer an inclusive education for all pupils, including pupils with SEND. Effective and reasonable adjustments are provided to support pupils within lessons. This enables pupils with SEND to achieve well from their starting points. Additionally, pupils with SEND engage in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The school has established a strong reading culture. Pupils quickly learn to read when they join the early years class. The approach to phonics is well ordered and taught by well-trained staff. Most pupils keep up with the programme. Staff use accurate assessments to quickly provide targeted support for pupils who find reading a challenge. Pupils read decodable books that match the sounds they know. This helps them develop their fluency and accuracy. Older pupils are motivated readers. They enjoy reading a wide range of books from the library. They understand that reading develops their vocabulary and knowledge.

Staff in the early years create a warm, welcoming environment where children feel safe and valued. Routines are established as soon as the children join the school. For example,

this year there has been a high focus on developing the children's social and emotional skills. Staff have placed particular emphasis on explanation through verbal communication. This has resulted in children being more independent and being better prepared for when they move to Year 1.

The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is exceptionally well planned and expertly delivered. Pupils learn how to stay safe online, and they learn to respect cultures and faiths that are different to their own. Staff make sure pupils know how to keep safe outside of school and understand the importance of having good physical and mental health. Staff quickly respond to pupils' worries. They skilfully address more common concerns through PSHE lessons and assemblies.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exceptional. They adhere to the school's rules and expectations consistently. Pupils demonstrate high levels of respect towards others. For example, pupils are polite and well-mannered when they meet adults around the school. Within lessons, pupils are highly motivated and show a strong commitment to their education. They want to keep improving. Pupils' attendance is strong. They are punctual and are rarely absent from school. The school has clear systems which are followed if a pupil is absent. Effective support and care are provided to families if it is required.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate adjustments to their workload and the training that they receive. Governors and trustees provide highly effective support and challenge to the school. The school has strong relationships with parents. They are extremely supportive, and speak positively 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 curriculum is not always adapted appropriately so that pupils are able to deepen and extend their learning. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to know how to adapt the learning so all pupils can achieve ambitious outcomes across the curriculum.

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	150571
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10378607
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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lia Campos
CEO of the trust	Flavio Vettese
Headteacher	Jenny McGhee Wallace (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.stalbans.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Trust in May 2024.
- Since the previous inspection, the head of school and executive headteacher have been appointed.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in March 2024. The next section 48 inspection is due in the school year 2026/2027.

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 graded 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 met with representatives from the local governing body, the diocese and trust leaders, including the CEO and the deputy CEO.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, school leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors looked at records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school and talked to them about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Benjamin Axon, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lucille Pollard	Ofsted Inspector

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