

Inspection of St Louis Catholic Academy

Fordham Road, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7AA

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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 headteacher of this school is Sue Blakely. This school is part of Our lady of Walshingham 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, Flavio Vettese, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Bergin.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to school. They embody the school's ethos of 'learning to love and loving to learn'.

Pupils are safe in school. They have very strong relationships with their trusted adults, knowing they will resolve any concerns. Pupils behave well and attend regularly.

Pupils enjoy their lessons, and most achieve well. The school has high expectations for pupils to do well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Occasionally, learning activities do not yet accommodate the full range of learners' needs. This means some pupils do not yet achieve as well as they could.

A wealth of activities brings pupils' learning to life. For example, pupils experience an earthquake simulator and take part in history workshops. Pupils also enjoy visits to the local racing museum, theatre, wildlife parks and residential stays.

Pupils have extensive opportunities to extend their talents and interests. These include cheerleading, French club, cooking, choir, pony academy and music club. Many pupils benefit considerably from these opportunities, including disadvantaged pupils.

The school provides pupils with meaningful leadership opportunities. These include 'Minnie Vinnies', chaplains, sports leaders, school councillors and reading champions. Pupils thrive in these roles, welcoming the opportunity to help others.

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

The school commits to 'inspiring learners to excel'. The recently revised curriculum is suitably ambitious for all pupils. The progression in knowledge and skills is well sequenced. The school ensures that this curriculum is taught effectively. This helps pupils to be well prepared for their future lives.

Pupils achieve well across subjects. For example, the school has focused on improving children's reading skills successfully. In Nursery, children learn sounds accurately through songs, games and rhymes. In Reception, skilled staff ensure children pronounce sounds correctly. They quickly identify children who need more help to keep up. This support helps these pupils become more fluent, confident readers rapidly. Children's reading books are chosen carefully to help them practise this fluency. This firm foundation in reading provides a strong platform for children's further learning.

Across subject areas, pupils' learning is exciting and interactive. For example, pupils held a remote call with a Peruvian geologist in a rainforest recently. Pupils have frequent, built-in opportunities to engage in debate and discussion. This helps pupils recall prior learning and apply new knowledge. Pupils show their deep subject knowledge through their high-quality written work. This work demonstrates the school's high expectations for all pupils, including those with SEND.

The school has a very clear vision for realising these high expectations of pupils with SEND. This includes those pupils recently joining the school with more complex needs. Some of the work on achieving this vision is very recent. This includes staff training in making appropriate adaptations to learning activities. This training is already having an impact but is inconsistently applied. This means the support for pupils with SEND remains varied. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should yet.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. The school takes every possible opportunity to enhance pupils' cultural awareness. This focus threads through the whole curriculum, emphasising the themes of love, respect and tolerance. For example, pupils sponsor a Ugandan pupil and exchange letters. They enjoy international food fairs and take part in a multifaith fortnight.

The school is proactive in encouraging pupils to be responsible, respectful citizens. Pupils vote for their school councillors and house captains. The school councillors rotate so that everyone has a chance to take on this role.

Pupils are active in the local community. They attend church services, organise fundraising events and visit the local care home.

Pupils learn how keeping fit and healthy helps them to stay strong and well. The school celebrates special events such as vocational week and mental health week. The school's partnership with Suffolk young carers helps enhance pupils' emotional well-being.

Staff enjoy working at this school. They understand the curriculum is evolving and can see the impact on pupils. Staff also say that recent revisions to the curriculum resulted in extra workload. Leaders are aware of this and are working to support all staff during this transition period.

The trust has a precise oversight of the school through its checking and support activities. The local governors are knowledgeable and deeply committed to the school's continuing success.

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 all staff have the skills they need to assess and adapt learning to meet the additional needs of pupils with SEND consistently. As a result, some of these pupils' needs are not met reliably. The school should ensure that staff are well trained to assess, plan and address the needs of all pupils with SEND and have the tools and understanding to make effective adaptations.

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	139448
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10378525
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	321
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Bergin
CEO of the trust	Flavio Vetesse
Headteacher	Sue Blakeley
Website	www.stlouisacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- A new headteacher will take up post at the school in April 2025.
- The school has a Catholic religious character. The school had its last section 48 statutory inspection in November 2024.
- The school hosts a breakfast and after-school club managed by Premier Education.
- The school does not use the service of an alternative provision.

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 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.
- The inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the chief executive officer, the chair of board of trustees, a member of the Diocese and members of the local governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, art, science and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. They also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- 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.
- The inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons and outside during social times.
- The inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents, staff and pupils via surveys, including Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Marc White	Ofsted Inspector
Vicki Webber	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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