

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

URN: 149372 | Inspected: 02 December 2025

Safeguarding

standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

Achievement Needs attention

Over the past two years, too few pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined by the time they left the school at the end of Year 6. This was particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. There are some current pupils who have persistent gaps in their knowledge, for example in handwriting and spelling, meaning they are not as ready for their

next steps

in education as they should be. However, pupils' achievement is improving rapidly. Leaders' swift and effective actions mean that pupils are now making better progress as they learn the curriculum. For example, pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of learning in mathematics. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are developing more secure knowledge. On the whole, pupils are learning the important knowledge they need to be successful in subjects across the wider curriculum. They build upon their previous knowledge in subjects such as history, geography and art to help them learn and remember new concepts with increasing confidence and accuracy.

Curriculum and teaching Needs attention

Across the school, there are some inconsistencies in the way the curriculum is taught. Leaders know this and are taking the right action. The way that staff use assessment does not always lead to pupils completing activities that precisely meet their needs. For example, pupils are sometimes asked to write extended paragraphs when they are not yet secure in their transcriptional skills when writing shorter sentences. The key knowledge that pupils need to know is not consistently taught explicitly enough. When teaching is more effective, pupils develop more secure knowledge of what has been taught. They undertake activities that are closely matched to their needs and starting points. Leaders have designed an ambitious and coherent curriculum across the school. Pupils benefit from this as they move through the school. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 learn to read well. This is because skilled staff teach the school's phonics programme well. Pupils who need extra help with reading receive well-tailored support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from careful adaptations to their learning. This is often closely matched to their individual targets. Staff have secure subject knowledge in the subjects they teach. This enables them to explain new concepts clearly so most pupils can understand.

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Early years Needs attention

In the past, too few children leaving the early years were prepared well enough for Year 1. A significant proportion had large gaps in their knowledge and skills, meaning that they did not have what they needed to access the Year 1 curriculum. Leaders have taken swift and appropriate action. Children's development is improving and they now build knowledge more securely. High-quality interactions with staff enable children to develop new language and vocabulary skills. Staff set out the key vocabulary that is going to be taught. This is modelled across the environment for children to use independently. Children use this growing knowledge of language to help them learn to read. Phonics is taught well so that children develop secure early reading skills. Children understand and follow the routines of the classroom. Warm relationships with staff mean children are safe and confident in school. Children quickly learn how to be kind to one another – they emulate the adults' warmth and respectful behaviours. Children share, cooperate and develop ever increasing levels of independence. Positive relationships between the school and parents and carers are fostered, which means there is a shared understanding of what children are learning and how well they are developing between home and school.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This is a school where friendship and happiness shine through. Everyone has a friend to help them when needed. The school's vision of promoting a 'love of others' is evident in the way pupils enjoy spending time with their friends. In social times, there is plenty of laughter and fun. Older pupils keep a keen eye out to make sure they include younger pupils in games and activities. Pupils' attendance has improved over time, meaning most attend regularly. This is because leaders have taken highly effective steps to enable pupils to come to school as often as possible. They know pupils and their families well, providing well-tailored guidance for pupils. This deep knowledge of pupils' needs also encompasses those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those who face other barriers to their learning or wellbeing. The well-tailored pastoral provision helps these pupils to overcome the challenges they may face. A culture of mutual respect permeates the school. This, in turn, leads to pupils behaving very well in class and around the school. They listen carefully to staff and try their best with their learning. Historically, pupils did not achieve as well as they could have. Too many left school at the end of Year 6 not ready for secondary school. Similarly, too many children left Reception Year without the knowledge they needed to be successful in Year 1. Although pupils' achievement is improving, there remains more to do to ensure pupils consistently gain the knowledge they need to prepare them for their next stages. Pupils benefit from a range of rich opportunities to help them become well rounded citizens of the future. For example, pupils regularly meet visitors from a wide range of careers, including those working for the emergency services, scientists and artificial intelligence developers, to broaden their horizons and champion ambition.

Next steps

- Leaders must ensure that staff use assessment effectively to target gaps in pupils' learning and provide activities that focus on their needs, including basic skills such as handwriting and spelling.
- Leaders should ensure that teaching in the early years continues to help children learn, apply and practise the important skills they need to be ready for Year 1.

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- Leaders should ensure that staff consistently sequence pupils' learning carefully and precisely so that pupils build secure knowledge across the curriculum and are prepared well for their next stages of education.
- Leaders should continue their work to further improve the attendance of a small number of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have established a highly inclusive culture throughout the school. Their effective work to reduce pupils' barriers to learning has had a positive impact. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs accurately and swiftly identified. This means effective guidance and support are in place to help pupils with SEND learn well. Disadvantaged pupils receive the right support at the right time. This is because the pupil premium funding is used carefully to have the greatest positive impact on pupils' experiences. Pupils receive a range of support to boost academic progress and attendance, or help with personal family circumstances. This leads to these pupils feeling part of a school community that cares deeply for their individual needs. Staff routinely review how well pupils with SEND and those with other barriers to learning are progressing towards their targets. Leaders provide regular and relevant training for staff to ensure they keep their knowledge about SEND up to date. Positive links with external agencies ensure that the school draws upon expert knowledge if this is needed. For example, the school accesses mental health support from local experts to provide high-quality support for pupils and their families.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Current leaders, including trustees and governors, have provided great stability and clear strategic direction for the school, following a significant period of leadership turbulence.

Over the past few years, leaders have worked with skill and determination to improve the quality of provision that pupils receive. Their decisions have been made with the very best interests of pupils at heart. There is now a culture where high expectations are the norm, behaviour is highly positive, and attendance, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, has improved considerably. Leaders also know where more work is needed. While they have taken the right steps at the right time to strengthen provision further, the impact of this work is not yet fully evident, such as on pupils' achievement. Trustees and governors have a clear understanding of their roles. They are highly strategic in their approach and provide significant challenge and support for leaders. Trustees and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They hold leaders to account very effectively. Staff's professional learning is well-established. The impact of this has led to the continued improvements seen across the school. Staff feel hugely valued. Senior leaders do all they can to look after staff's workload and manage staff's wellbeing. This means leaders have a team of staff who share their high expectations and drive to continue the journey of

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improvement in a few key areas that they are well underway with.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The school's personal development offer is broad, purposeful and designed to raise aspirations, build character and prepare pupils for life beyond school. The personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that key concepts are revisited each year. This helps pupils to develop a secure understanding of themselves and develop a deep respect for others. While pupils understand the strong Catholic ethos of the school, they enjoy learning about a wide range of religions. Pupils embrace the differences in other people no matter their background, culture or belief. Wider cultural enrichment opportunities such as visits to the ballet help pupils to experience the world beyond their community. Leaders have carefully considered some of the experiences their pupils may not encounter and provided these. Opportunities such as trips and community charity work help pupils to see the difference they can make to their school and local community. Many of these experiences include trips on public transport to help pupils prepare for their futures. Pupils who are part of the school council and other leadership groups delight in these opportunities. They take on these roles with gusto, and older pupils take great pride in helping their younger counterparts understand the responsibilities which these roles bring. Pupils have a secure understanding of right and wrong. They know to speak up if they see wrongdoing in school. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to stay safe online and offline. They have age-appropriate understanding of risks they face now and as they grow older. Clubs are well attended. These provide the chance for pupils to explore interests, develop new skills, and enjoy time with friends through Irish dancing, badminton and 'eco club', to name but a few. Together, these broad experiences help pupils to become confident, socially aware, and well-rounded young people who are well prepared for their life in wider society. Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have transformed the culture of attendance over the past few years. As a result, pupils now attend well, and attendance continues to improve. Historically, however, pupils missed too much school. Attendance was below the national averages for all pupil groups, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders analyse attendance methodically. They know pupils and families very well, which means they know exactly how to help if a pupil's attendance starts to fall. Leaders ensure that all staff play their part in making sure pupils come to school regularly and on time, which they do. The school is a calm and purposeful place for pupils to learn. Classrooms are abuzz with learning. The highly positive interactions between pupils and adults lead to the culture of mutual respect. Pupils recognise and value the high expectations that leaders and staff set around their behaviour. These expectations are consistent across the school and realised throughout. This includes during social times where, in the dinner hall and playground, the same positive behaviour is seen from pupils. Bullying is almost unheard of. However, pupils are fully reassured that if they have friendship problems, staff will always help them resolve issues that arise.

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For detailed performance data including disadvantage gap analysis, historical trends, and comparison tables, visit the school's profile on WhatSchool:

<https://whatschool.ai/en/school/st-john-fisher-catholic-primary-school-loughton>