

# Inspection of a good school: St John Payne Catholic School, Chelmsford

Patching Hall Lane, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 4BS

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Inspection dates: 19 and 20 June 2024

## Outcome

St John Payne Catholic School, Chelmsford continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending St John Payne Catholic School. They appreciate the exemplary support and encouragement that staff give them. The school is determined that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), succeed. Pupils are polite, tolerant and kind to each other. Most pupils behave very well.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. Pupils' well-being is a high priority. Pupils are encouraged to share any worries or concerns. As a result, pupils are happy and safe. They develop their resilience and are supported to persevere with their learning.

Pupils build their confidence through a wide range of leadership opportunities and clubs. Pupils take on leadership roles, such as house and worship leaders and subject ambassadors. There are many events and competitions, including public speaking challenges and theatre productions.

Pupils contribute to the wider community. They raise money for charity. Many volunteer at a nearby special school. Pupils attend a broad range of clubs. Pupils with SEND swim and officiate at the Olympic aquatic centre in London. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are enhanced by well-planned visits, including trips to places of worship from different faiths.

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

The school provides all pupils with a broad curriculum. There are a wide range of vocational options for pupils in key stage 4 and 5. The school has thought clearly about the design of its curriculum. Subject leaders have identified what they want pupils to know. They choose the order of topics carefully so that once pupils have secure knowledge of a topic, they can move confidently on to the next. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this well to introduce and model new knowledge effectively. Teachers regularly check how well pupils have learned. They use these checks to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and then adjust their teaching to close them successfully.

In most subjects, work set is ambitious. Pupils have opportunities to discuss and evaluate what they are learning. Teachers are rigorous in how they prompt pupils to deepen their thinking. This enables pupils and students in all key stages to build a rich body of knowledge. Work is well adapted to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. In some subjects, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. When this happens, the learning is not always sufficiently demanding. Consequently, pupils in these subjects do not gain the breadth and depth of knowledge they need to achieve highly.

Pupils are encouraged to read widely. There are regular opportunities to 'drop everything and read'. Many pupils are enthusiastic readers. In English, pupils enjoy a diverse range of texts. The school regularly checks how well pupils can read. If pupils need additional help with their reading, well-trained staff work with them to achieve this. Sixth-form students also help deliver the 'sports reader' programme. This support helps weaker readers become increasingly fluent and accurate.

Leaders have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Most pupils try their best to meet them. They are keen to learn. If pupils need support to behave well, pastoral staff work skilfully with them to manage their feelings and emotions. This improves these pupils' conduct. There are times when some teachers do not follow the behaviour policy consistently. Pupils find it frustrating when, as a result, other pupils sometimes do not behave as well as they do. However, leaders are aware and are addressing this.

Pupils and staff see the school's diversity as its strength. Pupils feel part of a welcoming and inclusive family. They are valued, whatever their faith, sexuality, or home language. Pupils lead an annual 'culture day', when they attend wearing traditional cultural dress. Pupils look out for one another. They feel confident to challenge and report unkind comments or behaviour.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They understand the importance of topics such as consent and their 'digital footprint'. Pupils receive effective guidance on their next steps in education, employment, and training. Pupils in Year 10 do 'mock interview' days. However, there are currently limited opportunities for pupils to meet a range of employers and, in key stage 3 and 4, to have first-hand experience of the world of work. This limits how much pupils know about a range of careers and courses open to them.

Leaders are determined to make the school the best it can be for all pupils. Governors are effective in holding leaders to account for this. Leaders provide effective staff training, including for early career teachers (ECTs). Staff are well supported with their workload. Staff turnover is, therefore, low.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, staff do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils do not always gain the depth and breadth of knowledge they need to achieve highly. The school should ensure that all staff set work that meets the ambitious aims of the curriculum.
- The school's careers, education, and guidance (CEIAG) does not provide pupils with enough high-quality encounters with employers, or with opportunities to experience the world of work. This means that pupils are not always aware of the opportunities ahead of them and how to access these. The school should ensure that its CEIAG programme is developed and implemented, and its effectiveness evaluated fully, so that pupils build their knowledge and take part in meaningful work experience.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2016.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115238
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345155
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1197
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Richard Barber
<b>Headteacher</b>	Thomas Coen
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sjp.essex.sch.uk">www.sjp.essex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	16 and 17 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St John Payne Catholic School is a voluntary aided school in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brentwood. The most recent inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in April 2024, and it will receive its next inspection within eight years of that date.
- The school currently uses three registered alternative providers for pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 lead inspector spoke to the members of the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, drama, history, and science. 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 and visited a range of lessons.
- 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 held meetings with a range of leaders, including the careers coordinator, and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with ECTs and staff involved in the induction of new teachers.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector considered the 147 responses and 116 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. He also considered the 102 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 498 responses to the pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Aimee Bray

Ofsted Inspector

Emma Matthews

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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