

Inspection of St Aidan's Catholic Primary Academy

Benton Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 4AS

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to come to St Aidan's. Teachers care a great deal for pupils. Pupils are happy here and want to learn. Guided by the school's values, leaders celebrate the cultural diversity of all pupils.

Pupils are keen to play an active role in caring for the school environment. The recently developed woodland area is used for both learning and play. It is very popular with pupils, and they are keen to ensure that this area is kept tidy and well presented.

Pupils feel safe and are kept safe. They were keen to explain that they would not be a bystander if one of their peers was upset. Pupils are taught how to recognise the signs of bullying. Adults deal with any concerns without delay. Pupils know that staff will support them if there are any issues.

Staff have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. Pupils strive to reach these expectations, and typically they behave and achieve well. Pupils and teachers have worked together to devise 'classroom charters' so that every pupil knows what is expected of them. Occasionally, pupils lose focus on their work. This happens when teachers set tasks that do not consider well enough pupils' prior knowledge.

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

Leaders are ambitious and want all pupils to do well. Subject leaders ensure that teachers know what should be taught and when to teach it. In early years, children settle quickly and learn the routines and expectations that leaders have. Children's learning and development are assessed by skilled staff. Children leave the Reception class well prepared for learning in Year 1 and beyond.

Staff assess pupils' understanding regularly, for instance when they introduce new concepts or areas of learning. They find out what pupils have remembered from previous lessons in a subject, both recently and from previous years. Staff aim to build on this so that learning takes place in a coherent sequence. This is working well in most instances. However, there are times when staff plan work but do not check that pupils have the knowledge that they need to be successful. When this happens, it holds pupils back from developing their understanding and, at times, pupils' interest in their learning wanes.

Children begin the phonics programme as soon as they join early years. Children in these classes learn the sounds that letters represent in a logical and ambitious sequence. Books that children read are closely matched to the sounds that they have been taught. Leaders have ensured that all staff have received high-quality training in early reading. Staff have the expertise to teach the phonics scheme effectively. Pupils who join the school in later years or those who need more support to keep up in reading are identified quickly. Pupils spoke about their love of reading

and the books that they enjoy. They particularly like the newly developed 'reading nooks' and how these give them ideas about new books they might like to read.

Leaders and staff work together to identify any pupils who might have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They seek guidance from other professionals, such as speech and language therapists and psychologists, to ensure that pupils with SEND receive timely support.

In a few subjects, leaders recently identified that their expectations were not enabling pupils to access a broad and deep curriculum. Leaders' curriculum thinking has developed considerably, and the curriculum in these subjects is now both broad and demanding. In music, for example, pupils are now taught to use a range of tuned and untuned instruments. Pupils build up their understanding step by step. However, some staff are not fully familiar with leaders' updated expectations. This leads to variability in how consistently the curriculum is being delivered in these subjects.

In other subjects, such as mathematics and science, the curriculum is more securely embedded. Pupils learn key ideas, including subject-specific vocabulary. In science, for instance, Year 6 pupils plan and carry out experiments to explore their understanding of concepts such as gravity and water resistance. They draw fluently on important scientific principles that they have learned in previous years, for example how to design and carry out a fair test.

Pupils value the opportunities provided for them to take on responsibilities. For example, pupils like their role in nominating and voting for the head boy and head girl. They also help out with gardening in the school grounds, work as librarians or support younger pupils during lunchbreaks. All of this work is part of leaders' goal to support pupils to become active contributors to wider society. Pupils also take part in a wide range of clubs, including for coding, puzzles, Spanish and many sports. Pupils enjoy these activities very much.

The headteacher and her leadership team consider the workload of the staff carefully. Staff feel well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors make sure that safeguarding is a high priority. The relevant recruitment checks are carried out on staff before they start to work at the school. Staff know pupils and their families very well. They are vigilant and they know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety.

Staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training, including on e-safety and extremism. Staff with responsibility for safeguarding work with external professionals to make sure that pupils get the help they need promptly. Leaders monitor attendance closely to ensure that they know where pupils are and that they are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers expect pupils to carry out work that does not build well on prior learning. Pupils struggle to complete these tasks successfully, and in turn are unable to practise and develop their knowledge. Leaders should support staff to select activities and resources that enable pupils to develop their knowledge progressively and work successfully towards the intended curriculum goals.
- In some foundation subjects, such as music, the curriculum has recently been reviewed and implemented. There is some variability in the way that the curriculum is being delivered because staff are getting used to the new curriculum expectations. Leaders should ensure that the implementation of the curriculum is regularly monitored and that all staff have the expertise to deliver the curriculum as leaders intend.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140295
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	10241127
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	318
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Corcoran
Headteacher	Victoria Campling
Website	www.staidansacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	22 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Aidan's Catholic Primary Academy joined The Good Shepherd Catholic Trust on 1 September 2018. Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a Nursery class.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and members of staff. Inspectors also met with members of the academy trust and the local governing body.
- Inspectors did deep dives in reading, mathematics, music, science and physical education. For each of these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with

subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with staff and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum for other subjects.

- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments from parents.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff about the school's work to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also considered safeguarding records and documentation, including the school's single central record of staff suitability checks.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

David Bryant

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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