

Inspection of St Norbert's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Tollgate, Spalding, Lincolnshire PE11 1NJ

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 May 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
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 Jenna Withers. This school is part of Our Lady of Lourdes 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), James McGeachie, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nigel Stevenson.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Norbert's Catholic Voluntary Academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Norbert's Catholic Primary School, Spalding to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as St Norbert's Catholic Voluntary Academy as a result of conversion to academy status. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy, inclusive school where pupils enjoy their learning and form strong friendships. The school's virtues, such as love, forgiveness, compassion and hope, provide pupils with positive values, helping them grow into thoughtful and kind individuals.

Warm, positive relationships underpin pupils' behaviour throughout the school day. They use their manners readily, showing consideration for others. Pupils' conduct around school and in lessons is calm and orderly.

The school has high ambitions for what pupils can achieve. From the early years, children build strong foundations for learning, and as they progress, they continue to meet these expectations in most curriculum areas.

Pupils know they can make a positive difference to life at the school because their voices and opinions are appreciated and recognised. They enjoy a wealth of leadership responsibilities. For example, the reading ambassadors recommend literature to their peers, while sports leaders are proud to run activities during social times. The school's rich extra-curricular offerings in music, languages, sports and the arts help to nurture pupils' talents and interests.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers praise the school highly. They appreciate how staff support their child's holistic development, helping them to become well-rounded individuals with 'strong morals'.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious, building logically on content previously taught. Staff have recently refined the curriculum to sharpen its focus on the precise knowledge that pupils need to acquire. Pupils typically develop well, demonstrating curiosity and a willingness to learn.

The school is highly ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Their needs are identified quickly. Staff ensure that these pupils learn the curriculum with increasing fluency and independence. Careful adaptations enable these pupils to learn successfully alongside their peers.

The school has welcomed an increasing number of pupils with English as an additional language in recent times. Many join partway through key stage 2. As a result, some of these pupils have limited time to benefit fully from the school's curriculum before reaching Year 6. This was reflected in some of the published outcomes for key stage 2 pupils in 2024. Staff have reshaped the English curriculum to further strengthen pupils' understanding of transcription, grammar, spelling and punctuation. However, some pupils find it difficult to communicate their ideas clearly in their writing due to gaps in their understanding.

Staff appreciate the training they receive, recognising how it helps them to deliver the curriculum with increasing confidence. In some subjects, specialist staff collaborate with class teachers to deliver the curriculum. Staff check pupils' learning carefully so that gaps or misconceptions are corrected. At times, the work pupils complete does not give them sufficient opportunities to deepen their understanding of the most important knowledge. As a result, some pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage in learning as they could be.

Staff are experts at teaching phonics. Pupils' reading books are well matched to the sounds that they know. When necessary, staff provide extra help to any pupils who need support learning the early reading programme. Pupils with SEND also benefit from targeted support so that they can learn to read systematically.

In the early years, children respond well to clear routines and guidance. They make meaningful links across the curriculum. For example, children rehearse their understanding of numbers through games and matching images with numerals. Through play, they use resources to help them compose words and sentences with increasing independence. Children write with a sense of pride about their accomplishments, in readiness to share in the class 'news book'.

Pupils develop a strong understanding of their rights and responsibilities. This helps them to foster a positive and mature approach towards their behaviour and conduct. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare because pupils take ownership of their actions. Parents receive clear and accessible information about attendance. This has led to notable improvements in many pupils' attendance.

The school provides a thoughtfully designed enrichment and personal development programme. Pupils develop a clear understanding of how to stay safe, both within their community and online. They learn the importance of valuing and caring for themselves, each other and their wider surroundings. They show respect and appreciation for the diverse communities that make up British society.

The trust, alongside the local governing board, provides the school with support and challenge. Together, they recognise the many strengths of the school. They offer staff opportunities for training that align with the school's priorities, helping staff to enhance their skills.

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 does not support pupils well enough to develop a secure understanding of vocabulary, syntax, sentence structure and audience awareness in their writing.

Consequently, some pupils find it difficult to communicate their ideas effectively in writing across the curriculum. The school should equip staff with the expertise needed to help pupils refine and sharpen their knowledge of writing and expression across the curriculum.

- On occasion, the school does not ensure that the activities that pupils complete help them to learn more about a subject. When this happens, it hinders pupils from building a rich body of subject knowledge across the curriculum. The school should ensure that pupils engage with tasks that aim to deepen their understanding of the subject and prepare them for the next steps in the school's 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	146257
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10347680
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	209
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nigel Stevenson
CEO of the trust	James McGeachie
Headteacher	Jenna Withers
Website	www.st-norberts.lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust in September 2018.
- This is a Catholic voluntary-aided primary school within the Diocese of Nottingham. The school's previous Diocesan Canonical Inspection took place in March 2022. This is an inspection of the school's religious character. Diocesan canonical inspections of Catholic schools typically occur every five years.
- The school does not use any 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). 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, and art and design. 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.
- Inspectors also sampled aspects of the school's English, geography, music, and design and technology curriculums.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, and leaders who have oversight of the early years, the provision for pupils with SEND and behaviour.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around the school and at social times.
- 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 lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing board and the trust, including the CEO.
- Inspectors spoke with parents, staff and pupils on site. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tim Leah

Ofsted Inspector

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