

Inspection of a good school: Oaklands Catholic School

Stakes Hill Road, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO7 7BW

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 July 2022

Outcome

Oaklands Catholic School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Oaklands is a welcoming and diverse community, united by strong Catholic values. Pupils speak confidently about spiritual and moral issues, regardless of whether they have a personal religious faith. School staff provide a high quality of care which makes the young people feel safe and prosper. Sixth formers describe their school as a big family. Leaders encourage everyone to take part in the very wide range of activities on offer. As the school's mission statement says, 'no-one gets left behind'.

Pupils get a broad choice of subjects right through the school. Leaders make sure that each subject has comprehensive, well-chosen content taught by experts. Staff encourage pupils to read daily. However, they do not always teach vocabulary and context in enough detail. This means that some pupils do not understand what they are reading in sufficient depth.

School leaders set high standards in behaviour. They re-established sound routines after the disruption caused by the pandemic. Some pupils needed extra help to manage their behaviour. Leaders introduced consistent systems to do this. As a result, behaviour is good throughout the school. There is very little bullying and staff resolve it well if it happens.

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

Experienced senior leaders know their school community extremely well. The board of governors provides astute guidance. Together, they set out a demanding framework of Catholic values and virtues as part of their 'Oaklands Way'. This helps shape the content of each subject. Subject leaders bring in the values or virtues where the topics fit best. For example, they investigate individual liberty when pupils study 20th century world history.

The curriculum is broad. Pupils get a good balance of academic and practical subjects. There is a wide choice of suitable examination courses. The school provides opportunities to study personal, social and religious themes from Year 7 to Year 13.

Subject leaders plan what pupils will learn very carefully. Each new piece of learning builds on what has come before. Teachers give pupils extra stepping stones to help them work on more complicated tasks. As pupils become more confident, the additional help is removed until pupils are fully fluent. This process works well, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Tests and assessments are planned thoughtfully. They give pupils very useful feedback on how to get better. As one sixth former put it, 'they show us the gaps in our knowledge'.

Teachers know their subjects very well. They ask questions skilfully to establish exactly what pupils know and understand. Teachers identify misconceptions and discuss with pupils how to correct them. Pupils with SEND find this approach very helpful. Teachers and support staff work very well to overcome any social or emotional barriers for these pupils, so they can learn equally well as their peers.

Teachers set demanding standards for sixth form students. Students are taught to practise independent research, preparing them well for higher education. Intellectual debate and discussion then consolidate what has been learned.

Teachers usually present subject matter very clearly. They teach useful techniques so that pupils can remember what they need. Sometimes, teachers try to give too much content in one go. When this happens, pupils do not recognise which bits of information are the most important or useful. They become confused and their learning is less secure.

School leaders rigorously check the progress of pupils to see if anyone needs additional help. This includes identifying pupils with SEND. Leaders gather information from primary schools, parents and carers, diagnostic tests and from subject teachers to try to identify each pupil's needs. Pupils at an early stage of reading get specialist help to catch up.

Reading for pleasure is encouraged in the school. Teachers read with pupils every day. Leaders make sure that new vocabulary is displayed in lessons. However, teachers sometimes give insufficient background knowledge when starting a new text or topic. They only explain some of the new words. As a result, pupils do not always fully understand what they are reading.

Leaders ensure pupils are well-prepared for adult life. Teachers foster strong moral and social awareness. Older pupils get real-life work interviews to help prepare them for employment. Sixth-form students lead 'affinity groups' of pupils from diverse backgrounds to give voice to different viewpoints. These groups build self-confidence and help pupils to respect each other better. School leaders are considerate when they make plans. For instance, they share the calendar in advance to avoid overloading pupils or staff at 'pinch points' during the year.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has a high profile in the school and is extremely well led. Leaders are alert to the risks facing young people in the area. Staff are well trained and take their responsibilities seriously. Employment checks are meticulous. External agencies are brought in to provide additional help and advice when needed.

School leaders have created a culture where everybody feels responsible for safeguarding. This extends to the young people themselves. Sixth-form students formed an 'affinity group' to help younger pupils to bring concerns to the safeguarding team. This has empowered young people and made them feel even safer.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always give pupils enough information about the subject they are reading. Pupils sometimes do not recognise or understand important words in their reading. As a result, they can form misconceptions which undermine future learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely give pupils the background knowledge and vocabulary they need to understand the texts and topics that they study.
- In a few subjects, teachers sometimes introduce too much information or too many new concepts at one time. This makes it difficult for pupils to prioritise which content is most important and they become confused. It overloads their working memory and they do not remember what they need. Leaders should ensure that teaching consistently helps pupils to remember long term the content that they need.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	137345
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10200494
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1346
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	209
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marc Evans
Headteacher	Matthew Quinn
Website	www.oaklandscatholicschool.org
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A very small number of pupils attend two registered providers of alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Edith Stein Catholic Academies Trust.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2019, when the school was graded as outstanding. Its next section 48 inspection is due to take place by March 2027.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also met with governors and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history. 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.
- The lead inspector visited lessons in some other subjects to assess the impact of support for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils to understand how the school keeps its pupils safe. The lead inspector scrutinised the record of employment checks made by the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before and after school, as well as during break times.
- The lead inspector looked at other documents and information available on the school's website.
- Inspectors looked at the feedback given by parents, pupils and staff through Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Keith Pailthorpe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Hanlon

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