

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Address: George Row, Bermondsey, London, SE16 4UP

Unique reference number (URN): 149346

Inspection report: 3 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✔ 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.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have placed a high priority on attendance and punctuality. They have worked closely with families to understand barriers to positive attendance. Leaders provide support to overcome these. Regular attendance and punctuality are now widely celebrated. Pupils have a secure understanding of the importance of this. Overall, attendance is above the national average and on an upward trajectory. Pupils enjoy school and love learning. They do not want to miss school. Leaders provide unwavering support for pupils with vulnerabilities, for example, in relation medical needs, to ensure that they access learning and attend school.

Behaviour in classrooms and at social times is delightful. Pupils are highly engaged and focused on their learning. They are excited in lessons and use this to discuss and collaborate with their peers effectively. Classrooms are alive with purposeful interactions. The new behaviour policy underpins the positive and high expectations for all pupils. Pupils understand this policy and appreciate the fairness with which staff apply it. Bullying and unkind behaviour are exceptionally rare, as pupils respect each other's different beliefs and personalities. They know that staff will deal with any poor behaviour quickly. All staff support pupils to have positive experiences at school. For some pupils, this includes effective strategies to help them focus and manage their emotions.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

High levels of training for all staff ensure that they know how to identify pupils' needs swiftly and recognise where further support is needed. Staff address pupils' individual needs quickly with precise, expert support in class. Leaders regularly review pupils' progress to ensure that they receive the exact support they need to learn the curriculum and access wider enrichment opportunities.

All staff know and understand pupils' needs. Highly positive relationships between staff and pupils contribute to the extensive nurture and support that pupils receive. Leaders also work closely with external professionals and families to gain a comprehensive knowledge of pupils' needs. For each pupil, individual plans of support identify with precision the strategies needed to enhance pupils' learning and care. These strategies, including adaptations to learning, are used consistently, enabling pupils to experience success and make progress. For example, pupils benefit from targeted resources on vocabulary development to support them with their writing.

Teachers support pupils with barriers to learning through a wide range of extra support and targeted teaching. This enables vulnerable pupils to learn the curriculum alongside their peers. When pupils need further support, leaders collaborate with local specialist provisions. Through this, the school is able to provide a tailored curriculum that meets pupils' needs. This enables pupils to make secure progress from their individual starting points.

Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to enhance the academic and holistic development of disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that disadvantaged pupils gain

experiences that enrich their learning and vocabulary. As a result, disadvantaged pupils achieve highly, including in national tests in Year 6.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school weaves an extensive personal development programme through every part of school life. In their actions, pupils consistently demonstrate the impact of this curriculum. Pupils' deep understanding of other people's experiences, beliefs and cultures creates a harmonious environment. They celebrate difference and value the diverse cultural heritage of their school. In their learning, pupils apply resilience to overcome problems and challenge themselves. Teachers nurture confidence as soon as pupils start school. This enables all pupils to be able to share their thoughts readily and respectfully with peers and adults.

The relationships curriculum helps pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of friendships. Pupils know how to be a good friend, to listen to others and how to resolve issues. They have a strong understanding of how to stay safe, both online and in the community. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils learn about safe travel on public transport and acting responsibly.

Leaders ensure that fundamental British values are not just taught but experienced in day-to-day school life, including, for example, through the democratic elections of the head boy, head girl and prefect team. The pupil leaders' actions exemplify the values of the school. Younger pupils look to them for support and friendship. Pupil leaders are immensely proud of the impact they have on the school community. For example, 'newsround' leaders enjoy being able to document the school's wide-ranging enrichment opportunities in film clips.

Pupils learn how to regulate their emotions. Staff give pupils strategies to help them when they feel anxious or worried. When needed, leaders ensure that pupils and families access professional therapeutic support. This helps with pupils' emotional wellbeing.

Leaders and governors have prioritised ensuring all pupils benefit from a comprehensive enrichment offer. They want pupils to have experiences that they may not otherwise have gained. The wide-ranging extra-curricular clubs enable pupils to develop new talents and interests. Well-planned trips enhance pupils' understanding of the curriculum. For example, pupils build on their learning about habitats and animal classification by visiting the zoo.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils achieve well in national tests and assessments at the end of Year 6. Disadvantaged pupils also achieve very well over time. In some instances, their attainment in national assessments is above their peers nationally. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in learning at secondary school.

Last year, phonics screening check outcomes were below leaders' expectations. Addressing this is a priority area for leaders. Targeted and carefully monitored interventions are having a

positive impact on pupils' phonics learning, with gaps in knowledge being filled.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) typically learn the curriculum well, including those pupils who benefit from a bespoke curriculum. They make positive progress from their starting points across a range of subjects.

Work in books shows that pupils, including pupils with SEND, build secure foundational knowledge. They have secure recall of prior learning and use knowledge effectively to answer questions. They also use what they know to make connections between learning. For example, pupils use knowledge gained from reading texts to support their understanding of what they study in history.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have made extensive developments to the curriculum and teaching. The curriculum is carefully sequenced to ensure that learning builds over time. This includes organising and adjusting the curriculum to ensure that pupils in mixed-age classes successfully access the full national curriculum.

Teaching approaches across the school are typically used effectively. For example, there is clear modelling of learning and explicit use of vocabulary. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use it effectively to question pupils and challenge their thinking. Nevertheless, leaders have accurately identified that there is some variability in teaching. Occasionally, some teaching across subjects and years groups is not as effective as it could be in promoting a secure understanding of curriculum content. Ironing out these variances is a priority for the school.

Teachers provide focused and effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps these pupils to understand the learning. For example, teaching breaks down concepts into steps that pupils can understand or pre-teaches unknown vocabulary that will come up in lessons.

The school has a sharp focus on building pupils' foundational skills. Pupils develop fluent handwriting and spelling strategies that support their writing. This enables them to provide detailed responses in wider learning and creative writing. The school nurtures a love of reading, and teachers deliver learning through carefully chosen texts. Pupils develop a secure understanding of number in the early years and key stage 1. Older pupils use this knowledge effectively to problem solve and answer calculations accurately.

Early years

Expected standard 

The well-planned curriculum ensures that children experience and make progress in all 7 areas of learning, with classroom activities enabling children to practise and apply their learning independently. Children happily and confidently engage in learning and enjoy interactions with adults. They like speaking with and learning from visitors, such as local police officers who speak to children about the vehicles they use.

Teaching lays the building blocks to support children's early reading and writing development. Staff teach phonics knowledge clearly and consistently. Children regularly

practise using letter sounds in their independent writing and reading. Children are also supported to build and demonstrate a strong recall of number and apply this effectively to solve problems. For example, Reception-age children understand how to count pairs of numbers and if there is a remainder. Teaching typically includes a clear focus on the vocabulary that children need to know. However, some adult interactions with children are not as effective in contributing to the development of children's vocabulary and knowledge.

Leaders work closely with families to ensure a smooth transition, when their children start school. They invite parents and carers to take part regularly in school life. The school also holds workshops to support parents' understanding of the curriculum. Typically, children achieve well by the end of Reception and are prepared for the next steps. Teachers work closely with Year 1 staff to ensure that they address any gaps in children's learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders' impact on the school is considerable in a relatively short time. They have taken swift action to adjust the curriculum and teaching, ensuring that pupils receive what they need to learn well. Leaders have also worked effectively to strengthen inclusive learning approaches across the school. Intensive professional learning has equipped staff to fully understand how to identify and overcome barriers to learning for the most vulnerable. As a result, staff deliver the new curriculum effectively. Families and pupils are highly positive about the changes to the curriculum and culture of the school.

Leaders have identified key areas for development clearly and accurately. They have also outlined suitable actions to achieve their aims. For example, leaders know that further work is required to develop and share leadership responsibilities across the school, especially if the pace and impact of recent improvements is to be sustained.

The trust and local governance committee understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement comprehensively. They provide robust challenge, support and guidance to leaders, with everyone sharing the same high ambition for pupils' education. All those responsible for governance are aware of and fulfil their statutory duties. Staff feel valued and supported by leaders. They appreciate the opportunities for collaboration and learning across the trust, as well as the care and consideration shown to their wellbeing.

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

Pupils are immensely happy at this school and genuinely excited about learning. They are eager to answer questions and challenge themselves. Pupils across the school typically achieve well. They have secure reading and writing skills that enable them to successfully access the whole curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive precise support matched to their individual needs. This enables them to learn the curriculum fully and achieve well. Disadvantaged pupils also achieve highly.

Pupils show great respect for each other. This is evident in their highly positive behaviour. They treat their peers with kindness and support one another in learning. These supportive relationships contribute to pupils' regular attendance and enthusiasm for learning. Older

pupils and those in pupil leadership positions act as role models. For example, prefects support younger peers at playtime. Pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of difference. They celebrate and value the cultural heritage of the school community. These experiences help pupils understand how to be responsible, active citizens in modern Britain.

Behaviour throughout the school is impressive and pupils feel safe. Highly positive relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils can share worries when they have them. They know that others will listen to and support them.

Leaders and staff foster trusting relationships with parents and carers. They know pupils and families well and provide bespoke support to meet individual needs. The school's values thread through daily life and pupils state that the school is 'like one big happy family'. 'House teams' help to create community as pupils strive to gain house points for their work and conduct.

The school provides extensive enrichment opportunities. A vast range of trips enhance the curriculum. For instance, pupils enjoy a visit to the British Museum to deepen learning about the Stone Age. The wide range of clubs enables all pupils to try new activities and develop talents and interests, such as building an enjoyment and love of cooking.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the carefully designed curriculum is taught consistently well in all subjects and year groups, so that pupils secure sound and detailed knowledge and skills across all elements of the curriculum.
 - Leaders and those responsible for governance should build on current work to grow leadership expertise at all levels, including subject leadership, to enhance strategic oversight and development of the school's work.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff in early years maximise opportunities to engage children in high-quality interactions and learning throughout the day.
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About this inspection

This school is part of St Oscar Romero Catholic 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), Clare Verga, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Allison MacQuire. There is also an executive headteacher, Nicola McNelis, who is responsible for this school and a headteacher, Mandy Nicolaou, who is responsible for this school.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, executive headteacher and other leaders and staff. They also spoke with the CEO and director of primary education, trustees, local governance members and a representative from the diocese during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently make use of an alternative provision.

The school joined the St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust in September 2022. Since that time the school has undergone significant changes in leadership.

Headteacher: Mrs Mandy Nicolaou

Lead inspector:

Sacha Husnu-Beresford, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Robin Boshier, Ofsted Inspector

Sam Carnegie, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 3 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

295

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

345

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

33.21%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.37%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.88%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	67%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	61%	Close to average
2022/23		60%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		74%	
2024/25 (revised)	84%	75%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2022/23		73%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	76%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	82%	72%	Above
2022/23		71%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		73%	
2024/25 (revised)	80%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	73%	Close to average
2022/23		73%	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	68%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	44%	46%	Close to average
2022/23		44%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	95%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23		60%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	74%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75%	58%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	89%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	59%	Close to average
2022/23		59%	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	68%	69%	-1 pp
2023/24 (final)	44%	67%	-24 pp
2022/23		66%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	95%	81%	14 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23		78%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	74%	78%	-5 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	89%	81%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	79%	-17 pp
2022/23		79%	

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.3%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.0%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.8%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	13.3%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.4%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.1%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard ●

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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