

Inspection of a good school: Maria Fidelis Catholic School FCJ

1–39 Drummond Crescent, London NW1 1LY

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 December 2021

Outcome

Maria Fidelis Catholic School FCJ continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite, friendly, and caring towards each other. They are welcoming towards visitors and proud of their school community. Staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct. They also have great aspirations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond well to this. They enjoy lessons, work hard, and behave well.

The school feels like one big family. Staff and pupils greet each other respectfully. Pupils are happy and feel very safe. At lunchtimes and breaktimes, they have fun. Some pupils play football and basketball, while others socialise. Pupils include each other in their games and conversations. Bullying is rare. When it does occur, school leaders address bullying appropriately and immediately.

Pupils build relationships and a competitive spirit through the house system. They take part in a wide range of activities. These include sports and textiles clubs, a school choir, and police cadets. The whole school comes together for community events. For example, pupils complete a walk for charity in Regent's Park.

The school provides a wealth of opportunities for its pupils. Staff seek to discover each pupil's individual interests and talents, so that all pupils can experience success. They prepare pupils well for their future.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum to inspire pupils. The curriculum is ambitious for all, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils study a broad range of subjects in all year groups. Teachers provide effective guidance for students to help them choose their subjects in the sixth form. This support takes account of students' interests and their possible next steps in education and/or employment. The curriculum is generally well designed, and pupils learn subject content in a logical order. This ensures that pupils build up their knowledge and understanding of subjects over time. However, curriculum plans in history are not as developed as in other subjects

because they do not cover, in depth, all areas of the national curriculum.

Teachers use their subject knowledge to support pupils to learn the curriculum. For example, they provide clear explanations when teaching new content. Teachers use questioning well and select carefully the most appropriate teaching activity. This includes using quizzes and homework to help pupils remember what they have learned before. Teachers use assessment to identify gaps in pupils' learning. They teach again the knowledge that pupils do not remember. Pupils said that they find that assessment helps them to improve their work. However, some teachers could check pupils' understanding more regularly, so that they have a better understanding of what pupils know.

Leaders quickly identify the needs of pupils with SEND and make sure that they have appropriate support. For example, learning support assistants work together with teachers to provide effective help in lessons. This allows pupils with SEND to complete the same work as all other pupils. Leaders have put in place appropriate steps to help pupils at the early stages of reading. This includes training key staff in how to teach phonics. These staff support pupils to become confident, fluent readers.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare and pupils are quick to follow instructions. Pupils are motivated. They show positive attitudes to their learning. Leaders continue to work with both staff and pupils to ensure that this remains the case. For example, leaders involve staff in evaluating the behaviour and attitudes of pupils in the school.

Leaders believe that it is important to develop pupils' character and broader attributes. The personal, social and health education curriculum prepares pupils to become healthy, responsible and active citizens. Pupils learn about mental health and well-being, citizenship, careers and relationships. Leaders have developed strong partnerships with employers. This creates opportunities for pupils to take part in valuable work placements. Teachers provide sixth-form students with effective support and advice on higher education, apprenticeships and employment.

Governors and leaders share a mission founded on shared values that puts pupils and their needs first. They continuously strive to improve the education that the school provides. Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel well supported and valued. Leaders listen to staff and are mindful of their workload. For example, leaders have recently made changes to assessment and reduced the number of meetings that take place. The governing body provides appropriate strategic leadership by supporting and challenging leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding established in the school. Leaders ensure that staff are alert to any risks that might affect pupils. Regular training for staff helps them to identify signs of potential safeguarding concerns. Staff know to whom they must report concerns, and are knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe.

Leaders work with external agencies to secure the necessary support for pupils who are at risk. Leaders follow safer recruitment practices. Pupils feel safe in school. They are aware of potential safeguarding risks. They know whom to go to if they have any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The key stage 3 history curriculum does not cover, in depth, all areas of the national curriculum, and sometimes content is not sequenced coherently. This means that pupils' knowledge of history is not as detailed or connected as it could be. Leaders should ensure that the history curriculum is planned so that pupils develop detailed and connected knowledge, and that it is at least as ambitious as the national curriculum.
- Some teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding in lessons. This means that some pupils do not get the feedback that they need. Leaders should make sure that all teachers routinely and systematically check what pupils have learned.

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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 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	100055
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10204472
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
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	814
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Modesto Tondelli
Headteacher	Helen Gill
Website	www.mariafidelis.camden.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is of a Catholic religious character and part of the religious order of the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ). Sisters from the religious order are members of the school's governing body.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place on 20 and 21 November 2019.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, other school leaders and members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke with the school's professional partner from Camden Learning.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, 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 also visited some key stage 3 English lessons on day 2 of the inspection to consider pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead and one of the school's deputy designated safeguarding leads. They looked at safeguarding documentation and record-keeping, including the single central record. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 38 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 27 responses to the online survey for parents, Parent View.

Inspection team

Ian Rawstorne, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nigel Clemens

Ofsted Inspector

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