

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Notre Dame RC School

Looseleigh Lane, Derriford, Plymouth, Devon PL6 5HN

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 January 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The executive head teacher of the school is Michael Antram. The head of school is Ann Morgan. This school is part of Plymouth CAST 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, Zoe Batten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ruth O'Donovan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value the many opportunities to learn about the world around them at Notre Dame. For example, pupils, including sixth-form students, visit Iceland to enrich their knowledge of geography and Barcelona and the Ardeche to improve their sporting skills. Through the curriculum, pupils develop strong leadership skills. They value their roles in supporting assemblies and representing the views of pupils about the subjects they study.

The school has improved academic expectations of pupils and sixth-form students. The school acknowledges that pupils' achievements at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5 have been weak. Although the school has revised the approaches to teaching and learning to improve outcomes for pupils, it is too early to judge the impact.

Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. As a result, their behaviour and attitudes to each other are very strong. They form trusting relationships with staff. They are polite, inclusive and kind. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. The personal, social and health education programme enables pupils and sixth-form students to develop an informed understanding of the world around them.

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

The school provides a broad curriculum which pupils and sixth-form students value. However, their outcomes in many subjects have declined significantly. The school has a relatively new leadership team which has an accurate understanding of the main areas for improvement. The school has started to tackle the issues that have caused the decline in the quality of education. For example, the school acknowledges that staff do not consistently check on what pupils know and do not know. Consequently, staff do not have the information they require to address pupils' misconceptions effectively.

Pupils, including pupils with SEND, do not receive consistently effective support to improve their literacy. The school has established a robust training programme for staff to improve outcomes for pupils and sixth-form students. However, the school recognises that there is still much to do to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well in all areas of the curriculum.

Pupils, including sixth-form students, learn a well-designed personal development programme. This is a strength of the school. Throughout the curriculum, pupils learn about the importance of citizenship. They find out about democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law and their role in shaping the world around them. Pupils are inclusive, welcoming and polite.

The careers programme is very well-structured enabling pupils to make informed decisions about the subjects they choose to study at key stage 4 and their future careers. Sixth-form students study a comprehensive programme which supports them to make clear decisions about further education, apprenticeships and work. Pupils and sixth-form students complete work experience placements to enrich their knowledge about the world beyond school.

The school's revised behaviour policy is now well established, and the proportion of suspensions has reduced significantly. Pupils behave very well both in lessons and around the school. The school is a calm, orderly learning environment. Pupils who struggle receive personalised support.

The school has worked hard to forge relationships with pupils and families to ensure that they attend school. The school has adopted a breadth of approaches such as bespoke mentoring and working with external agencies to ensure that pupils do not miss out on their education. However, the school acknowledges that the attendance of some pupils, particularly some pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding, is too low.

Students in the sixth form are very proud of the school. They value the breadth of subjects they can study and the supportive relationships with staff. They are very positive about the many opportunities to develop their knowledge of the wider world. For example, students went on a pilgrimage to Walsingham with students from the national and international Notre Dame network of schools.

Governance is effective. Trust governance has an accurate view of the school and pose effective scrutiny of the work of leaders. Staff are positive about the changes at the

school and the support for their workload. They share the vision for improvement of leaders. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, systems to check what pupils know and do not know are not consistently applied. As a result, pupils' misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge are not addressed effectively. This means that some pupils do not learn as well as they could. The trust should ensure that information about the impact of the curriculum is used with accuracy and rigour so that pupils learn well.
- Some pupils, including pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding, do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they miss out on their education. The school must continue to ensure that parents and pupils understand the link between school attendance and achievement so that these pupils attend more regularly.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in June 2019.

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	140737
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10344674
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	765
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	105
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ruth O'Donovan
CEO of the trust	Zoe Batten
Headteacher	Michael Antram
Website	www.ndonline.org/
Dates of previous inspection	4 June 2019

Information about this school

- The school is part of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust.
- The school uses three registered providers and one unregistered provider of alternative provision.
- The school is of Roman Catholic denomination. The section 48 inspection is due in 2025. The previous section 48 inspection took place in May 2018.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 held discussions with the executive headteacher, head of school, members of the leadership team and governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with staff to consider their views.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff through face to face discussions.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Tong

Ofsted Inspector

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