



School Name: St Oswald's Catholic Primary School

School Address: Montague Road

Old Swan Merseyside L13 5TE

Head/Principal Ms Donna Hay

IQM Lead Ms Donna Hay

Assessment Date 22nd September 2025

Assessor Mr David Clay

Sources of Evidence:

• IQM Self Evaluation Report (SER)

- Review of range of documents
- Whole school learning walk and lesson drop in
- Observation of morning routines
- School website
- Lunchtime observation including to Lunchtime Clubs
- Children's Books
- School Website
- OFSTED Report
- Junior Assembly
- Pupil Passports and Plans
- Infant and Junior Morning Briefing

Meetings Held with:

- Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher and SENCo/Inclusion Lead
- Parents and carers
- School Council and RE Ambassadors
- Senior Leadership Team
- Teachers
- Family Liaison Officers
- Governors
- Office Staff
- Parish Priest
- HLTAs and LSAs





Overall Evaluation

St Oswald's Primary School is a large, three-form entry setting situated at the heart of the Old Swan area of Liverpool. The school's values, "Together with Jesus, We Will Learn and Grow in Faith", are more than just a phrase they encapsulate the vision for a loving, compassionate community where everyone supports one another. From the outset, the sense of community and togetherness is a real strength. Staff consistently spoke of the strength of the team and the support they receive from colleagues. This ethos is modelled throughout the school, where relationships between staff, pupils, and the wider community are warm, respectful, and inclusive.

The school has 584 pupils on roll and supports a higher-than-average number eligible for free school meals (35%). A significant proportion of pupils come from an area of high deprivation. The percentage of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is also well above national average, particularly those on School Support, with approximately 25.2% requiring provision that is additional to and different from the core offer. Numbers of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are increasing. Despite this high level of need, the school demonstrates an unwavering commitment to support and find solutions for pupils, including those with significant additional needs or who have experienced trauma. The number of pupils who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) has also risen significantly in recent years. Staff and students from all backgrounds spoke of the welcome the school offers, reinforcing Ofsted's (2024) recognition that the school is welcoming to all pupils.

Pupils are nurtured and encouraged to fulfil their potential both socially and academically. The curriculum drivers: Language Development, Diversity and Inclusion, Resilience, and Enrichment ensure a focus on inclusion both students and adults. Systems and support are in place to enable children to achieve well, particularly in reading, and this commitment was evident during the assessment. However, the school continues to adopt and embed curriculum that is taught consistently and effectively and is underpinned by research-based practice and theory. Learning behaviours in the majority of classrooms were excellent, with pupils demonstrating confidence, kindness, and enthusiasm. Inclusivity is not a bolt-on; it is embedded in the fabric of the school's culture. Pupils are proud to be members of St Oswald's and recognise the kind and nurturing ethos it provides.

St Oswald's is solution focussed and supports a significant number of children who have complex additional support needs. The school is continuing to develop and refine its processes to ensure that pupils have whole school practice that supports this. The school is working closely with the Behaviour Intervention Team (BIT Team) to develop its approach at quality first teaching level and also then in terms of support for its pupils. Throughout everything, the school puts the child and their needs at the centre and is solution focussed, open to ideas and adaptations to better support their pupils. The school's openness to ideas and development is a real strength and their commitment to work to get things right for all of their pupils, but particularly for those that are most vulnerable. Staff are compassionate and willing to develop practice to ensure the needs of the pupils, particularly the most complex needs, are well met. This solution-focused approach is evident in how staff seek to understand behaviour, supporting not just the child but their family. Parents echoed this sentiment, with one





describing the school as giving "100% support to their whole family," and while circumstances were not easy, "the school couldn't have done any more." Others recognised the challenges their children presented but celebrated the way the school adapted and supported them. Parents valued being involved in decision-making and praised the atmosphere where their children can "just be themselves."

The school council spoke passionately about the support they receive, particularly the introduction of the Zones of Regulation, which they felt had made a positive difference. Pupils confidently shared how they contribute to their community and charities, such as the Bobby Colleran Foundation. All schools were appreciative of the support they receive and spoke passionately about teachers and staff who support them. The children spoke of kindness that is clear from both adults and pupils within the school.

Learning environments are carefully considered and continue to develop. The recent building work in the juniors has created well-thought-out, practical spaces for learning. Classrooms are calm, purposeful, and consistent in their presentation, with displays that support learning. In the infants, staff have worked hard to create calm, high-quality spaces despite physical constraints. Each classroom has a clear St Oswald's identity. This was particularly notable in EYFS, where staff have embraced nature and natural materials to create an inspiring environment.

The school has built a strong reputation among families and the local community for being inclusive, nurturing, and aspirational. Partnerships with external agencies, such as SureStart, are well established, ensuring that support extends to the whole family. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities, with staff working to ensure that these are as accessible as possible. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about drama, choir, and sporting opportunities in athletics and football.

Throughout the assessment, it was clear that St Oswald's is a compassionate and inclusive school, with leaders and staff deeply committed to the success of all pupils. The phrase, "We are a great team", was repeated across conversations and encapsulates the collaborative and supportive culture that underpins the school. The team works together to continue the school development, aiming to become more inclusive and supportive of pupils as it develops. Staff are open to and supportive of developing provision to better meet the needs of its pupils, and with this continued drive their offer will continue to improve and develop.

Inclusion is central to all aspects of school life, and the school continues to seek ways to strengthen its provision further. Every member of the community understands their role in sustaining inclusive values and the importance of teamwork in achieving them. It is therefore my recommendation that St Oswald's be awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark Award and, with their drive for development and improvement, that they work towards becoming a Centre of Excellence at their next assessment.





I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award. There are only minor areas requiring development and the school is aware of these. I recommend that the school be awarded the Inclusive School Award and be reassessed in three years' time.

Assessor:

THECON

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

Joe McCann MBA NPQH

Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd





Element 1 - The Inclusion Values of the School

Inclusion is central to the ethos and daily life of St Oswald's Catholic Primary School. The mission statement, "Together with Jesus, We Will Learn and Grow in Faith", is lived out across the school community, shaping relationships, decisions, and practice. From the moment of arrival, pupils and families experience a warm welcome, and staff consistently describe the school as a team where everyone is supported to thrive. Governors also highlighted this ethos of welcome as a distinctive strength of the school.

The curriculum is underpinned by four drivers, Language Development, Diversity and Inclusion, Resilience, and Enrichment, with *Diversity and Inclusion* providing a golden thread throughout. This ensures that the curriculum not only reflects the community it serves but also prepares pupils to respect and embrace difference. Leaders and staff are solution-focused and demonstrate a deep understanding of the challenges many pupils face, including those with additional needs, disadvantage, or complex personal circumstances. The response to these challenges is never deficit-based; instead, the school's culture prioritises equity, compassion, and opportunity for all. This was reflected in the school's OFSTED report which noted ""The school community is welcoming to new pupils and their families. Staff and pupils embrace diversity. Pupils are highly respectful of the differences between people."

Whole-school practice has been deliberately developed to ensure that every child can succeed. Leaders have embraced cognitive science to inform curriculum design, ensuring that approaches are rooted in research about how children learn. Decisions are carefully considered and implemented consistently, meaning that pupils across year groups experience the same high-quality provision. Teachers use questioning effectively at the start of foundation lessons to revisit prior knowledge and identify gaps, ensuring that learning is built securely over time.

Parent voice is important to the school's development and termly parental questionnaires are evaluated and responded to practically. Individual parents supported this in how they feel listened to and involved in decisions about their child's education. The school works hard to give parents a voice and the senior leadership team alongside the Family Liaison Officers are always on hand to listen to and support parents.

Staff wellbeing is recognised as integral to sustaining inclusive practice. Leaders are proactive in supporting workload and fostering a positive culture where staff feel valued, trusted, and cared for. Staff spoke warmly of the support they receive from leaders and colleagues, describing the school as a place where being part of the team is central. This focus on wellbeing ensures stability in staffing, which in turn benefits pupils. Staff explained how their year group teams, and the wider team support each other both practically and emotionally.

St Oswald's is increasingly diverse, with over 30 languages represented and students coming from many different faith backgrounds learning together. Both staff and pupils affirmed that the school is a welcoming place where difference is celebrated and everyone feels included. Parents praised the way the school involves them in decisions and adapts provision to meet the needs of their children, while pupils expressed pride in belonging to a community that encourages them to "just be themselves."





At its core, the inclusive values of St Oswald's are not an initiative or an add-on but a lived reality. Through its Catholic ethos, its carefully designed curriculum, its solution-focused approach, and its deep care for staff and families, the school ensures that every child has the opportunity to flourish.

Next Steps:

To continue to develop the provision alongside external agencies to ensure that the learning environment continues to support the learning needs of all pupils.





Element 2 - Leadership and Management and Accountability

Leadership at St Oswald's is solution-focused and unwaveringly child-centred. Leaders are clear that every decision must serve the best interests of pupils, ensuring that barriers to learning are removed and that every child is given the opportunity to thrive. This commitment to children is evident in the school's pastoral provision, which prioritises wellbeing and support for pupils and families alongside high academic expectations.

The Senior Leadership Team provides significant operational support to staff and pupils, ensuring that systems run smoothly and that everyone feels cared for. Leaders are approachable, visible, and responsive, modelling the compassionate, caring ethos that permeates the school. Staff spoke warmly of the culture of trust and collaboration, describing the school as a strong team where "everyone supports each other." This ethos has been deliberately cultivated, contributing to staff stability and a consistent sense of purpose across the school.

Wellbeing is recognised as central to sustaining inclusive practice. Leaders demonstrate a proactive approach to managing workload and supporting staff. Initiatives such as a dedicated wellbeing day and the opportunity for staff to complete PPA from home reflect the school's commitment to valuing its team. Staff described feeling listened to, respected, and supported, which enables them to give their best to the pupils in their care.

Leaders are open to new ideas and approaches, encouraging innovation in practice and supporting staff to embed research-informed strategies across the curriculum. The school's vision for a compassionate, caring, and inclusive community is clear and consistently communicated, ensuring that staff, pupils, and families understand and share in the mission.

Governors play an active role in the life of the school. They bring a breadth of expertise from education and beyond, and they are both supportive and challenging in their approach. Governors know the school well, are clear about priorities, and are passionate about its success. They echo the pride expressed by staff and parents in the school's inclusive ethos, recognising that the warm welcome and sense of belonging make St Oswald's distinctive within its community.

Together, leaders, staff, and governors demonstrate a united commitment to inclusion. The culture of collaboration, care, and professional trust ensures that pupils receive the highest levels of pastoral and academic support within an environment rooted in compassion and aspiration.

Next Steps:

To further develop behaviour approaches and systems so that rules and guidance are clear, consistent, and applied across the school. This should ensure that behaviour management fully supports pupils' personal development and wellbeing, working in tandem with the recently introduced Zones of Regulation to build self-esteem, self-regulation and resilience.





Element 3 - Curriculum - Structure, Pupil Engagement and Adaptation

The curriculum at St Oswald's is carefully structured to ensure that all pupils are engaged, supported, and challenged to achieve their best. In the large majority of classes, learning behaviour was excellent, with children consistently on task, keen to learn, and eager to succeed. Experienced staff support pupils effectively, ensuring that lessons are purposeful and accessible.

During the assessment, pupils were clearly engaged in their learning across the majority of classrooms. Children with additional needs were carefully supported through tailored strategies and well-planned adjustments, enabling them to access their learning alongside their peers. Adults skilfully balanced support and independence, ensuring that pupils developed confidence while achieving success in their tasks.

Leaders and staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the benefits offered by each scheme in use across the school. Decisions about curriculum design are deliberate and rooted in inclusion, with each scheme carefully chosen to meet the needs of pupils and remove barriers to learning. In reading, for example, the carefully selected reading spine incorporates a diverse range of authors, reflecting and celebrating the community the school serves.

Language development is a golden thread running through the curriculum, underpinned in EYFS by the use of WELLCOMM and NELI to ensure that all pupils build a secure foundation in communication and achieve a good level of language development. This focus on early oracy provides strong foundations for later success across the curriculum. Mathematics is delivered through a mastery approach, enabling pupils to develop conceptual understanding. The use of concrete manipulatives is embedded as a strategy to support pupils in securing knowledge and applying it to more complex problemsolving. Consistency is also a strength across the wider curriculum, with retrieval questions used at the start of every lesson to consolidate prior knowledge, strengthen memory, and ensure that gaps are swiftly identified.

Inclusion is woven into the fabric of the curriculum. Adaptations and approaches are thoughtfully built in to ensure that all pupils can access learning successfully. This is not an add-on, but a deliberate feature of curriculum design, reflecting the school's values and its commitment to equity for all learners.

Next Steps:

To ensure consistency in use of questioning to assess learning and support engagement for those with gaps in learning throughout the school.

To continue to refine and develop approaches to ensure adaptations and microadaptations are consistently embedded, enabling all learners to progress. In particular, to extend the effective use of technology to support access, engagement, and independence for pupils with additional needs.





Element 4 - Teaching and Learning – Learning Environment, Planning Resources, Pedagogy

Consistency is a hallmark of teaching and learning at St Oswald's. Strategies are embedded across the school to ensure that pupils experience a coherent and structured approach. For example, Read Write Inc. (RWI) is well established, and staff deliver it with confidence and fidelity, ensuring that pupils receive high-quality, systematic teaching of early reading. This consistency was recognised by OFSTED in supporting all pupils to learn well.

Learning environments are calm, purposeful, and consistent across the school. Leaders and staff pay careful attention to reducing cognitive load by ensuring that only essential, high-quality information is displayed. Key learning prompts are clearly visible, accessible, and presented consistently in every classroom. The result is a series of clutter-free spaces where pupils can focus and thrive. In EYFS, the use of natural materials creates a homely, welcoming environment that supports young children's curiosity and independence. Even in more challenging spaces, where staff have had to be creative in their use of limited physical space, classrooms remain calm, consistent, and supportive of learning. Clearly a lot of hard work has gone in to developing these spaces.

During the assessment, a Year 1 classroom exemplified this approach. Pupils entered the room calmly after playtime and immediately engaged with their retrieval practice activity displayed on the board. Visual prompts were clear and purposeful, and pupils quickly settled to work with confidence. All children had access to concrete manipulatives as appropriate, while mixed ability pairs ensured peers offered support and supported independence. The atmosphere, despite two classes being within one open plan space was purposeful yet calm, reflecting the school's commitment to consistency and inclusion.

Planning is carefully considered to balance staff wellbeing with high expectations. Staff plan in teams, sharing expertise and workload to ensure consistency and quality. Planning is flexible and adaptable to meet pupils' needs, and colleagues spoke positively about the collaborative culture and the professional trust that enables them to achieve this.

Resources are well chosen and thoughtfully used. Staff employ them consistently across the school to support understanding and remove barriers to learning. Increasingly, resources are being adapted further to meet the needs of pupils, particularly in mathematics, where the use of concrete manipulatives is strengthening conceptual understanding.

The school is making effective use of its physical space to support learning, including for pupils with additional needs. Areas are being developed as breakout spaces and hubs, providing quieter, structured environments to support regulation and engagement. Leaders recognise the importance of continuing to work with external experts to ensure these spaces reflect evidence-informed practice and best meet the needs of pupils with sensory, trauma-related, or complex learning needs.





Next Steps:

To continue developing low-stimulus, practical, and well-designed breakout spaces that support pupils with additional needs.

To refine recent changes made in Key Stage 1, ensuring that learning environments are fully adapted to support engagement and progress.





Element 5 - Assessment

Assessment at St Oswald's is both rigorous and inclusive, ensuring that every pupil is supported to reach their potential. Leaders and staff are committed to using assessment not as an end in itself but as a tool to inform teaching, identify gaps, and provide personalised support.

Edukey is used highly effectively to record and monitor the progress of pupils with SEND. Individual passports and provision plans include clear SMART targets, which are regularly reviewed by the Inclusion Lead with input from teachers, parents, and pupils themselves. This ensures that provision is carefully tailored and that all staff are aware of how best to support individual learners.

A broad range of assessment strategies is employed across the school. Formal testing, such as NFER assessments, is used for Question Level Analysis, enabling subject leaders to identify gaps in knowledge and adapt planning accordingly. In the Early Years, WELLCOMM and NELI assessments are embedded, providing early identification of language needs and ensuring targeted support to give children the best possible start in their education.

Informal questioning and assessment for learning (AfL) strategies are consistently used across classrooms. These were recognised in the most recent OFSTED report and continue to be developed, with strong practice in mathematics being used as a model for other subjects. Teachers make use of retrieval practice, pre- and post-topic assessments, and 'live marking' during lessons, which allows immediate feedback and correction of misconceptions. Children understand the marking system well, and many could confidently explain the meaning of highlighted sections in their books during the assessment visit.

During the assessment, pupils in mathematics lessons were observed completing their *Flashback 4* activities. This approach, drawn from the White Rose mastery model, provides four short retrieval questions to revisit prior learning covering concepts from yesterday, last week, last term, and even earlier units. The strategy ensures that prerequisite knowledge is secure before moving on and strengthens long-term retention. While observed effectively in mathematics, leaders are now working to embed this approach more widely across the curriculum.

Assessment practices at St Oswald's are deliberately designed to be responsive. Teachers adapt lessons daily, with an emphasis on identifying prior knowledge and building on it. Pupil progress meetings take place termly, ensuring that data informs targeted interventions, CPD needs, and planning. Parents are kept well informed through open evenings, regular reports, and opportunities to review their child's work, creating a genuine partnership in supporting progress.





Next Steps:

Develop assessment of social and emotional development: Explore and implement tools such as the *Boxall Profile* to track and respond to the needs of pupils with SEND, particularly those with social, emotional, and mental health needs.

Further develop whole-class feedback, sharing the children's work and refining approaches to ensure that pupils have time to respond to feedback, revisit their work, and make meaningful edits, strengthening their independence and ownership of learning.

Further extend and ensure consistent use of retrieval practice across the curriculum: Building on the effective use of *Flashback 4* in mathematics, continue embedding retrieval strategies in other subjects to strengthen long-term retention and address misconceptions.





Element 6 - Behaviour, Attitudes to Learning and Personal Development

Behaviour and attitudes to learning at St Oswald's are underpinned by respect, consistency, and strong relationships. Staff know pupils well, and these secure relationships ensure that behaviour for learning is excellent in the large majority of classrooms. During the learning walk, pupils were observed to be engaged, respectful, and on task, including in lessons taught by HLTAs covering PPA. This demonstrates the strength of established routines and the consistency of expectations across the school.

Pupils are increasingly developing their ability to self-regulate, supported by the introduction of the *Zones of Regulation*. Staff use this approach with care and empathy, enabling pupils to become more independent in recognising and managing their own needs. Many children were able to articulate how the strategies and toolkit support them to manage their feelings and re-engage positively with learning.

The school actively celebrates positive attitudes and achievements. Pupils spoke confidently about the rewards system, including Dojos and certificates, and could clearly explain how these are used to recognise effort, kindness, and achievement. This approach supports a culture of encouragement and motivation, where children feel valued and proud of their progress.

Leaders are also mindful of pinch points in the school day, particularly lunchtimes. Pupils who need additional structure and support are offered lunchtime clubs, which provide opportunities to socialise, regulate, and engage positively in play. Staff respond consistently and empathetically to more challenging behaviours, ensuring that pupils are supported within agreed structures. Class charters, created by pupils at the start of the year, also reinforce shared ownership of expectations and values.

Attendance remains a whole-school priority. The Attendance Team, including Family Liaison Officers and office staff, provide both support and challenge to families, working closely with external agencies where necessary. Although progress has been made, leaders acknowledge that attendance remains an area for further development. Relationships with families are key and the FLOs work tirelessly to build these supportive relationships. Where necessary they are also able to signpost to additional support where needed.

Next Steps:

Develop the behaviour policy to ensure that all pupils clearly understand and consistently apply school rules and consequences, addressing current confusion between the traffic light system and the Zones of Regulation.

Continue to enhance the whole-school lunchtime offer, ensuring that this part of the day is structured to support positive play, social interaction, and self-regulation.





Element 7 - Parents, Carers and Guardians

Parents, carers, and guardians speak highly of St Oswald's and the welcome they and their children receive. The inclusive ethos of the school extends beyond the classroom and is consistently reflected in the positive relationships between staff and families. One parent commented that the school had been "100% supportive of their family even though they had hard times," while another described how "support doesn't stop at the school gates," with staff offering help at home as well as in school. One parent suggested it is a school where "difference is celebrated". Parents realised the lengths the school goes to to support their children who they described as "not an easy kid".

The voice of parents is valued and actively sought. Parents shared that their views are listened to and included in the development of provision for their children, particularly where pupils require additional support. They praised the accessibility of the Senior Leadership Team and SENCO, who are described as approachable, supportive, and "always on hand if we need someone." Positive daily communication is especially strong where pupils receive 1:1 support, with staff ensuring that parents are kept informed and involved in decision-making.

The school demonstrates flexibility and a willingness to adapt to meet the needs of families. Parents noted that St Oswald's "goes above and beyond" in making adjustments, contrasting this with less positive experiences they had encountered in other schools. This adaptability reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that all children and families feel included, valued, and supported. Parents can reach out to the staff they need and if they email, they feel this is responded to promptly.

Support for parents is also strengthened through wider opportunities. The PTFA is active in building the parent community and supporting both school initiatives and local charities. The school works closely with external organisations to ensure that families can access the right support when needed. During the assessment, a coffee morning with ASD specialists was held at school. Although attendance was limited, parents appreciated that the support was available and valued the school's efforts to provide it. In the last year, they had raised money to have a therapy dog come and work regularly in the school. They recognise their diverse community and support it in whatever way is needed. Staff and Parents work closely together to ensure the success of the PTFA. These links also provide support in the local community with organisations that members of the PTFA belong to and work for.

Overall, the partnership between parents and school is a strength of St Oswald's. Parents consistently describe staff as dedicated, compassionate, and committed to the wellbeing of pupils and their families. This strong collaboration ensures that families feel part of the school community and able to work alongside staff in supporting their children.

Next Steps:

To continue to develop the offer for parents and work for ways to ensure that attendance at events such as coffee mornings increases, particularly for those pupils most in need of this support – consider changes to timings and incentivising attendance.





Element 8 - Links with Local, Wider and Global Community

St Oswald's is a school deeply rooted in its local community while also outward facing in its approach to global citizenship and diversity. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils experience a curriculum and culture that connects them with the wider world, while celebrating the unique strengths and diversity of their own community.

Local links are a particular strength. The school works closely with a wide range of external organisations to provide support, enrichment, and opportunities for pupils and families. Partnerships include work with Deaf Active at the Joseph Lappin Centre, which provides invaluable experiences for pupils and raises awareness of inclusion and communication needs. The school also maintains strong links with the local parish, with pupils and staff attending monthly Mass and supporting wider parish life. Parents, carers, and governors consistently highlighted these partnerships as a distinctive strength of the school.

The PTFA is highly active in developing community connections, supporting school initiatives, and raising funds for both the school and local charities. Fundraising is not an isolated activity but woven into the curriculum, with pupils encouraged to take responsibility and contribute to causes. Pupils spoke with pride about their charitable work, and this is supported by the RE Ambassadors, who lead projects and help embed the school's Catholic ethos in daily life.

Global awareness is also fostered through curriculum design. *Diversity* is one of the school's curriculum drivers and is reflected in curriculum choices, such as the reading spine which celebrates authors from a wide range of backgrounds. The school celebrates each child's individuality and heritage, weaving their experiences into learning wherever possible. This inclusive approach ensures that pupils develop pride in their identity while also learning to respect and value difference in others.

The school is currently working towards the CAFOD LiveSimply Award, further evidence of its commitment to sustainability, stewardship, and global responsibility. This initiative builds on existing work around fundraising and charity, ensuring that pupils understand their role in making a positive difference to both their community and the wider world.

Next Steps:

Further embed the principles of the LiveSimply Award into the curriculum and wider life of the school, ensuring pupils understand sustainability and global responsibility. Continuing to extend international and global links, creating opportunities for pupils to connect beyond their local community.

Further develop the role of the RE Ambassadors to focus on wider global outreach and links.