

Inspection of a good school: St Bede's Catholic Primary School

Strathclyde Avenue, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 7DS

Inspection dates:

8–9 October 2019

Outcome

St Bede's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at St Bede's provide a safe and caring haven for pupils. Pupils enjoy school. They get on very well together. They told me that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that there is always someone to talk to if they are worried. They said that staff sort things out when issues arise.

Teachers inspire pupils to want to learn. They are eager to find out new things across a wide range of subjects. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Staff have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils have positions of responsibility, for example as members of the school council and as e-safety ambassadors. They take these roles seriously as they are keen to support their school.

There are many opportunities for pupils to experience life beyond the classroom. For example, older pupils join the 'muddy boots' club to go fell-walking. There is a strong tradition of music-making and performing. Pupils experience the thrill of performing in professional theatres and in Carlisle Cathedral. This makes their families and staff proud. Parents and carers told me how much their children grow in confidence through such events.

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

The well-designed curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to flourish academically in most subjects. Leaders have taken effective steps to review the curriculum plans for subjects other than English and mathematics. These plans carefully identify the knowledge that leaders want pupils to know at different points in each year group. Even so, some of these changes to the curriculum are very recent. In some subjects, pupils have not always been able to successfully build on what they already know.

Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support pupils' learning. By the time pupils leave Year 6, most achieve well in reading and mathematics. Their attainment

in writing is not as strong but it is improving. Teachers identify pupils who need extra help. They work with external agencies to support pupils' individual needs. Teachers ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND do similar work to other pupils. Teachers adapt learning when it is appropriate so that these pupils keep pace with their classmates.

Leaders want every child to be an avid and successful reader. Leaders introduced a new approach to teaching phonics in September 2018. Staff have had expert training. They are confident in their teaching and in helping any pupils who show signs of falling behind. Staff ensure that the books that pupils take home match the sounds they are learning. The love of reading that staff model is infectious. Pupils of all ages have favourite books that they review and recommend to others.

In the past, leaders have struggled to find ways in which to ignite pupils' desire to write. Teachers in the early years and key stage 1 are using new approaches. This is working well. Older pupils told me how teachers now provide them with a clear structure to help them shape their writing. They were able to explain how their writing has improved over time. All the same, some pupils do not have enough chance to develop their vocabulary and spelling across a range of subjects.

Leaders have adapted the geography curriculum. It is now structured in a logical way. Leaders have considered how pupils build on what they already know. For example, I saw pupils in key stage 1 consider local weather patterns. Teachers develop this knowledge further in key stage 2. Older pupils were able to talk about weather patterns around the world. They reflected on the impact of our everyday life in relation to climate change.

Children settle quickly in the early years. Staff know the children well. They focus their attention on developing children's speech and language. There is also an emphasis on activities which develop children's awareness and knowledge of numbers and shapes.

Most parents ensure that their children attend school regularly. Leaders go the extra mile in supporting parents who struggle to get their children to school every day. Leaders make sure that pupils learn how to keep healthy. Staff from the 'Life Bus' captured the imaginations of pupils in how they can keep healthy. The choir has a high profile in the local and wider community. From a video clip, I saw how uplifting it was for pupils when they performed with 'The Sixteen'.

Staff say senior leaders are mindful of their workload. The new assessment policy has reduced teachers' marking. The senior leaders are inventive in promoting the well-being of staff. Governors bring a wealth of skills to their roles. They have a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing in mathematics and English. This is not the case for other subjects in the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding has a high profile. They check that adults are suitable to work with children. Staff are clear about who to speak to if they have concerns. The designated safeguarding leader and deputies maintain thorough records. They work with external agencies and the local authority to make sure that pupils are safe.

Staff work with families to support and guide them when they have worries. Pupils know that they can talk to adults in school if they have problems. Leaders provide pupils with counselling when needed. Pupils told me that teachers teach them how to keep safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The changes that leaders have made to the way that subjects other than English and mathematics are taught are very recent. Leaders need to embed curriculum plans in subjects like geography to ensure that pupils are able to build on their knowledge as they move through the school.
- With the new approach to writing, pupils are achieving well. Across all subjects and through all aspects of the school's work, staff need to continue to build on increasing pupils' vocabulary and correct spelling.
- The relatively new chair and vice-chair of the governing body are quickly getting to grips with their roles. They demonstrate their commitment and drive in raising the opportunities and aspirations for pupils. The governing body needs to develop its skills in checking that pupils are making enough progress across the broad range of subjects and not just in English and mathematics.

The transition arrangements were used on this inspection to confirm that pupils benefit from a good quality of education.

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 school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, 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 convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 15–16 April 2015.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 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	112369
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10087673
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Grant Denny
Headteacher	Louise McMillan
Website	www.stbedes.cumbria.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	15–16 April 2015

Information about this school

- This is a Catholic primary school.
- The last section 48 inspection was on 29 April 2016.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, I met with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- As part of this inspection, I considered how phonics and early reading are taught. I also considered how the curriculum is planned in writing and geography. I met with subject leaders and visited lessons. I spoke to teachers about the lessons that they had taught and pupils who had been in the lessons. I looked at examples of pupils' work in books.
- I held meetings with teachers, support staff and subject leaders. I met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority.
- I visited lessons in each key stage. I spoke to pupils from each key stage and viewed examples of their work. I spoke to pupils about behaviour and expectations in the

school and observed behaviour around school and in lessons.

- I considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the free-text responses. I spoke to several parents in the playground.
- I examined records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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