

Inspection of a good school: St Robert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

Oldgate, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1QF

Inspection dates:

2 October 2019

Outcome

St Robert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy school. Pupils greet visitors to the school with broad smiles. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They take pride in their work and their books are well presented. Pupils told us that they enjoy their work as it is just right. They said, 'Teachers don't make it too easy so we get bored, or too hard that we can't have a go.'

Pupils behave well. They say that there is no bullying in the school, and behaviour records show that bullying is rare. Pupils say that there is lots to do at school, and that they have a range of after-school clubs that they can go to. The oldest pupils like the extra responsibilities that they get. The lunchtime buddies do a great job in making sure that the youngest pupils settle into school well.

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

Leaders want all pupils to access the same high-quality learning experiences. They are working hard to get this right. They have done a good job in mathematics. Teachers know how to build pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills well. Teachers build in time for pupils to practise their skills so that they can begin to remember more. Pupils' outcomes are improving and are above the national average.

History and geography are taught through a topic-based approach. This engages pupils, who are keen to learn more. The curriculum leader for history and geography has improved the schemes of work for these subjects. She has sequenced the important knowledge from the national curriculum well. However, important concepts are not embedded in topic teaching. For example, in history pupils told us lots of facts about Victorians, but were less clear about the order of events. Leaders know that they still

need to embed important concepts into their schemes of work. It is clear that leaders are taking the right actions to put this right.

Most children access the school's Nursery before transferring into Reception. Children get lots of opportunities to listen to stories and rhymes, which gets them off to a good start with their early reading. In Reception, children grasp initial letter sounds and use them to read and spell simple words. Teachers plan activities in the outdoors to support pupils' learning further. Not all of the outdoor activities do this well.

Pupils continue to improve their phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) knowledge as they move into key stage 1. The teaching programme for phonics is well structured. Pupils are assessed regularly. This information is used to make sure that pupils get the right support at the right time. More pupils reach the required standard at the phonics screening check than pupils do nationally.

Pupils are encouraged to read often. Classrooms are full of books for pupils to read at home. Any pupils who are not heard to read at home do so in school. Pupils enjoy listening to a class story at the end of the day. Leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching reading comprehension this year. Teachers plan activities to build pupils' reading comprehension skills over time. They have rightly planned for pupils to study a range of texts including traditional stories and poems.

There are different after-school clubs that pupils can access throughout the week. These are sporting and art clubs. Pupil groups such as the 'Minnie Vinnies' work closely with the local community to support various events and charitable causes.

Leaders and governors consider staff well-being when they make any change to policy or practice at the school. Staff value the support and training they receive. This makes for a very happy, hard-working staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders complete all employment checks to make sure that all adults who want to work at the school are fit to do so. They make sure staff are trained regularly so they know what the local risks are. Staff know the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. They know what to do if they have a concern.

The safeguarding governor and headteacher complete a safeguarding audit each year. This checks that the school's procedures are fit for purpose.

There are very few reported concerns in the school. When they do happen, the designated leaders for safeguarding are quick to follow up any concerns. They work closely with other professionals to make sure that the most vulnerable pupils get the support they need when they need it.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe when they use the internet. They know not to

give away any personal information. The oldest pupils are less aware of some of the local risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have developed a process for curriculum development, which has worked successfully in mathematics and led to good and improving pupils' outcomes. They have replicated this process for foundation subjects such as history and geography, and have produced carefully sequenced schemes of work. Leaders know that these schemes need to be developed further so that important concepts are implemented securely, and consistently, so that pupils are ready for the next stage of their education in foundation subjects.
- The early years outdoor learning environment was recently resurfaced to offer greater flexibility for staff. Children get regular access to outdoor learning, but some of the planned activities lack purpose, and children flit between activities without sustaining interest. Leaders must ensure that all planned activities in the outdoors have a clear learning intention. They need to make sure that all staff are skilled in knowing how to extend or consolidate children's learning in the outdoors. This is particularly important when children from both Nursery and Reception are accessing the same activities.

Background

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged St Robert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School to be good on 10–11 February 2016.

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're 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	122312
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10110785
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Fiona Swift
Headteacher	David Sutcliffe
Website	http://www.st-roberts.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 February 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided school.
- The school offers before- and after-school provision.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is smaller than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving special educational needs support is smaller than the national average. There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, we had several meetings with the headteacher, chair of governors, special educational needs coordinator, and curriculum leaders.
- Throughout the inspection, we looked at how well school leaders provide safeguarding training and updates for staff, and create a culture of vigilance. We talked to the designated lead for safeguarding and reviewed the school's documents and records relating to safeguarding.

- We agreed with the headteacher to carry out a review of: reading, mathematics and history as part of the inspection. Together with curriculum leaders for these subjects, we completed connected inspection activities that included: discussions with leaders, visits to lessons, work scrutiny, discussion with teachers and discussions with pupils.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Phil Scott

Ofsted Inspector

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