

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Aloysius Catholic Junior School Academy

Argyle Street, Hebburn, Tyne and Wear, NE31 1BQ

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many aspects of school life are of high quality. Pupils love coming to school. Many said how much they had missed school during the pandemic – their friends, the teachers and learning in class. Pupils are confident and friendly and say they feel very safe. They are polite, articulate, and keen to engage in conversation. They are proud of their school and its grounds. They are especially proud of their new colourful mosaic. It simply and aptly says 'Hope'.

Pupils trust their teachers and know they can talk to them about anything. Pupils behave very well. They say there is no bullying at all. Pupils want to succeed for themselves, without any extra incentives. Teachers have high expectations of them in both their work and attitude. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and not give up. Pupils respond eagerly to this. It helps them to achieve well.

The school ethos is one of care and being outward-looking. The school demonstrated its generosity during the local restrictions. It delivered hot and cold food across the community. One parent commented, 'This is an amazing school. The staff couldn't do more for the children.'

Pupils use and apply a deep store of knowledge in subjects such as geography, history and mathematics. Leaders' plans show their ambition for all areas of the curriculum, including reading, to be as equally well developed.

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

The drive and determination of leaders to provide the highest quality education and experiences for pupils is undeniable. Leaders are constantly pushing forward to improve.

They are restless to make sure the school is the best it possibly can be. Changes in leadership and governance have not slowed leaders down.

The school is leading new initiatives in the trust. The recent partnership work with secondary colleagues to develop the curriculum in geography and history has been a triumph. Key ideas have been woven through each topic. What pupils must know and be able to do at the end of each module are clearly identified. Learning is planned carefully and sequenced to build knowledge progressively. Pupils make sense of new learning because they can understand how it fits with what they already know and can remember. Teachers are well supported to develop their subject expertise. Pupils are enthused and excited to learn about topics such as biomes, natural resources and the water cycle.

The curriculum for mathematics has also been carefully planned and sequenced. Pupils acquire a firm grasp of number right from the start. The daily reasoning and problem-solving activities give them the chance to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge. They are quickly becoming adept mathematicians. During periods of national restrictions many pupils' arithmetic skills flourished and grew. Pupils achieve highly. They can access all aspects of the curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some other subjects in the curriculum are not yet of such very high quality. This is because they are not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced.

Reading is a very high priority for the school. Leaders know that high-quality reading skills are the gateway to learning in all subjects. The teaching of systematic synthetic phonics has been introduced to help pupils read words that they do not know and cannot read on sight. Nearly every pupil has a reading book that allows them to read accurately and with confidence. Pupils loved listening to a story at the end of the school day. Pupils' skills in reading are helping them to become fluent and skilled writers. A very small minority of pupils in this junior school lack confidence and struggle to read words.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils are kind and considerate. They apply themselves in lessons and work with persistence. Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is very good. They know the importance of well-being, including their mental health. They are eagerly looking forward to the resumption of educational trips, visits and residential. They are starting to enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular clubs they had before the pandemic.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that the quality of education may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's culture of safeguarding and care is deeply embedded and tangible. External auditors make annual checks. They make sure there is not even the smallest weakness in the school's safeguarding systems. Record-keeping is meticulous. Training for all staff and governors is timely and regular. This also includes information about any current local issues. Well-being and mental health are key priorities for pupils, families and staff. There

is a culture of watchfulness and attentiveness. This is a school built on care, and care in action. This is a significant strength of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects pupils struggle to remember the content they have been taught over time. New learning is not carefully planned and sequenced. Leaders must make sure that all teaching is designed and delivered to help pupils remember important knowledge and skills so that pupils can make sense of the new learning they are acquiring. Further work must be completed to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is of an equally high standard as in geography and mathematics.
- A small minority of pupils do not read with fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age. This makes it more difficult for them to access the wider curriculum. Leaders must make sure that the new approach to teaching phonics helps pupils catch up quickly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Aloysius' RC Voluntary Aided Junior School, to be outstanding in September 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 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	148274
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10199451
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Wendy Woods
Acting Headteacher	Kathryn Fenwick
Website	st-alloysius.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Aloysius Catholic Junior School Academy converted to become an academy in December 2020. When its predecessor school, St Aloysius' RC Voluntary Aided School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of the Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust.
- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2021.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out under Section 8 of the Education Act 2005.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders from the school, four members of the local governing body, the school's development partner and the chief executive officer of the trust.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector also listened to some pupils read.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits and at breaktime. He spoke to pupils about their views on behaviour and a group of pupils gave him a guided tour of the school.
- Safeguarding records, including the single central record were reviewed. The inspector talked to pupils and staff about their views of safeguarding.
- The views of 47 parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View were considered.
- The inspector met with staff to discuss their well-being and workload. He considered the 31 responses from Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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