

Inspection of a good school: St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School

Cowpen Lane, Billingham TS23 1LJ

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 January 2022

Outcome

St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff feel cared for at St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary. This is a school where relationships are strong, and everyone is looked after. Staff are good role models and pupils appreciate the care and support they receive.

Teachers and leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are polite and respectful of each other and adults. Pupils help one another if they have difficulties. Adults teach them about positive relationships and respect. Right from the start, in early years, children learn to share and play cooperatively. Pupils say they feel calmer since returning to school after periods of remote learning. Older pupils say bullying used to happen but not any more because 'it gets sorted now'. This is because adults listen to pupils and any concerns are dealt with promptly and fairly.

Leaders continued to develop the curriculum despite the pandemic. Curriculum plans are effective and implemented well in most classes. For some younger pupils, the COVID-19 pandemic has set them back. However, teachers have adjusted their teaching to make sure that work builds on what pupils know and can do. As a result, pupils are catching up.

Most parents speak highly of the school and staff. Views from parents were largely about the school being friendly and supportive. As one parent commented: 'All teachers know the names of the children, even those not in their class. It is a wonderful little school with staff who really care.' The lead inspector found that staff know pupils and their families well.

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

Leaders have collaborated with the schools across the trust to design an ambitious curriculum that is right for their pupils. Since pupils returned to school after the third national lockdown, leaders have made some changes to the core curriculum. There is renewed emphasis on teaching number in mathematics and developing vocabulary across all subjects, starting in the early years. Leaders know that these are the most important

areas that pupils need to support their learning across the whole curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 said they found fractions difficult to understand last year but now they can explain different methods for multiplying mixed fractions.

Reading takes a high priority in the school. Leaders have ensured daily reading for pleasure and story time from Nursery to Year 6. Teachers select quality texts that they know the pupils will enjoy. There are incentives such as the 'Reading Challenge', where pupils win a book prize if they read 10 books across the year. Pupils say they love reading. Younger pupils show great pleasure when they read aloud to adults.

Phonics is a priority right from the start. All staff are trained to teach the phonics programme. Staff follow the agreed programme consistently. This helps children in early years to quickly learn the sounds that letters make. Children use this knowledge well to read words and become fluent readers. The books the youngest children read closely match the sounds that they know. Adults spot when pupils have not remembered a sound. They sort out misconceptions straight away. Leaders use assessment effectively to identify and then support children who need more help. The phonics programme is extended to key stage 2. This is to help pupils who have not yet achieved fluency in their reading.

In subjects such as history and geography, leaders in the school, and the trust, have introduced a curriculum that builds the knowledge that pupils need. This starts in the early years, where teachers understand the importance of teaching vocabulary that links to subject content in Year 1. However, leaders recognise there is still work to do. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers know how to develop the knowledge pupils already have. For example, in history, key stage 2 pupils draw upon prior knowledge of the earlier historical periods to say how crime and punishment has changed over time. In key stage 1, pupils do not consistently recall what they have learned before. This is because adults do not adapt teaching well enough or use assessment techniques to find out what pupils know and can do.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. On returning to school, after the period of remote learning, leaders identified an increase in pupils who were anxious about returning to school. Leaders worked closely with specialist services to ensure pupils received the support they needed. Teachers and teaching assistants understand the needs of pupils with SEND and support them well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the support provided.

Leaders provide a range of high-quality experiences to support pupils' personal development. There are a variety of clubs after the school day and during lunchtimes, such as gardening, cooking and guitar tuition. Leaders also encourage pupils to understand how they can play a part in helping others, both in and out of school. For example, pupils organised recycling bins for paper after listening to a visitor talking about climate change. Pupils have learned about Pope Francis' invitation to everyone on the planet to care for our 'common home'. Pupils know that people and planet are a part of one family.

Governors and trustees are mindful of staff's workload and well-being. Governors listen to teachers' concerns and provide guidance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors have created a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures and are knowledgeable about local safeguarding concerns and national updates. All staff are clear on the procedures for reporting a concern if they think a child may be at risk of harm. Working in a small school, staff know each child and monitor their well-being closely. Leaders act promptly to ensure that all pupils are safe. They contact relevant external agencies to provide extra support for pupils.

Leaders carry out the correct safety checks on all adults who work in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, such as history and geography, teachers' subject knowledge is not as well developed as it is in the rest of the curriculum. As a result, teachers do not ensure that new learning builds on what pupils already know, and pupils' knowledge is not as embedded as it is in other areas of the curriculum. Subject leaders should ensure that all teachers understand the sequence of the curriculum and develop strong subject knowledge across all curriculum subjects.
- In some subjects, teachers do not regularly use assessment to find out what pupils already know. As a result, pupils do not always remember what they have been previously taught. Leaders should ensure that staff are trained to use assessment systems so that they can check on what pupils know and understand.

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 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 school to be good in January 2017.

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	142734
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10211189
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	Interim advisory board
Chair of governing body	Maria Matthews
Headteacher	Julia Rea
Website	https://stjohnte.bhcet.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school converted to become part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust on 2 December 2019.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The school was judged to be good at its last section 48 inspection in January 2016.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, and other leaders in the school, including the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the interim executive board and the chief executive

officer of the academy trust. She also spoke on the telephone with a representative from the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included the school's single central record of staff and visitors, records of safeguarding and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. She talked with curriculum leaders of these subjects and with two school improvement partners. The lead inspector visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- The lead inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes, and as pupils moved around the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- The lead inspector considered 17 free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. She also spoke with parents as they collected their children at the end of the school day. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, to analyse.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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