

Inspection of St Cuthberts Catholic Primary School, Windermere

Prince's Road, Windermere, Cumbria LA23 2DD

Inspection dates: 14 and 16 February and 4 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils genuinely enjoy belonging to this small, nurturing and cohesive school. They appreciate its diverse population. They delight in finding out about the different cultures and traditions of those pupils who come from other countries. Pupils work and play together in harmony. Disagreements are rare. If hurtful name-calling or bullying should occur, leaders deal with it well. Pupils feel safe.

Pupils trust adults to help them with their learning and to listen to their worries. They repay staff's care and kindness by following the high expectations that are set for their behaviour. This makes St Cuthberts a calm and pleasant place to be each and every day.

Pupils willingly volunteer for a wide range of leadership roles. For example, they lead celebration assemblies, organise games at playtimes and act as buddies to the children in the early years. They wear their blue caps and flak jackets with real pride and they take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils' care for each other extends to animals and the natural world. They eagerly grow plants to enter into the local 'fill your boots' event, while older pupils happily work alongside their newly hatched chicks and Mabel, the therapy dog who is in training.

Leaders want pupils to succeed academically. However, over time, pupils' achievement across the curriculum has declined. This is especially true for children in the early years and for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some pupils struggle to read fluently or accurately. This makes it more difficult for them to access the curriculum.

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

A period of leadership instability, low expectations and a weak curriculum have led to a decline in the quality of education that pupils receive. The new headteacher, with increasing support from the multi-academy trust, is beginning to turn this situation around. However, the pace of change has been too slow. This is because the headteacher is shouldering far too much of the responsibility to bring about the necessary improvements. There is not enough leadership capacity to tackle the shortcomings at the school.

The curriculum lacks ambition. It is not commensurate with the national curriculum, nor do leaders make enough use of the government's early years foundation stage framework. As a result, children in the early years, and pupils across the rest of the school, do not learn all that they should. They are ill-prepared for the next stage of their education. The curriculum does not help pupils to gain the knowledge that they need to be successful. This is especially true for pupils with SEND.

Leaders have begun to put systems in place to check what pupils have remembered across a unit of work. However, they are at the early stages of ensuring that teachers use assessment information to spot misconceptions in pupils'

understanding. As a result, pupils develop gaps in their learning, which widen as time goes on.

Until recently, leaders have failed to prioritise reading in the curriculum. They have not ensured that all staff who deliver the school's phonics programme are suitably trained. The books that leaders provide for pupils do not support the school's phonics programme well. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise and develop their reading knowledge as a result. They do not receive the support that they need to become fluent and accurate readers.

Some children in the early years, and pupils in key stage 1, struggle to learn the relationships between letters and the sounds that they represent. Leaders do not provide the support that these pupils need to catch up. As a result, pupils do not develop secure reading knowledge by the time they are in Year 2. This impedes how well they access the wider curriculum.

Leaders provide a well-resourced classroom for children in the early years. However, the curriculum to underpin children's learning is not fit for purpose. It does not allow children to develop their knowledge across all areas of learning. By the end of the Reception Year, children are not prepared for the key stage 1 curriculum. They are on catch-up from the start.

Leaders do not identify pupils with SEND early or accurately enough. Some pupils with SEND receive careful and nurturing support to make sure that they are settled in school. However, many do not receive the support that they need to overcome their barriers to learning. This limits their achievement.

In contrast to their academic achievement, pupils thrive emotionally and socially at this school. A wide range of trips, and visitors to the school, extend pupils' understanding of the world beyond their small school community. Pupils also develop in confidence when taking part in inter-school events. The regular opportunities for pupils to work outdoors enhance their resilience and ability to work as part of a team. The waiting list to join the many clubs is a sign of how well these are shaped to foster pupils' interests and talents. Leaders make sure that individual achievements, no matter how small, are celebrated. This builds pupils' self-esteem and promotes their self-worth.

Pupils learn about and respect the differences between themselves and others. They gain a secure sense of fundamental British values and an understanding of why these are important in their everyday lives. They especially enjoyed their recent tea party to celebrate the upcoming coronation of King Charles III.

Pupils conduct themselves well during lessons and around the school. Older pupils act as responsible role models to help children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 to behave sensibly when moving to and from the lunch hall. Pupils' attendance is improving over time, although a few pupils miss considerable periods away from school. Leaders have recently improved their systems for checking

attendance. They are working more productively with parents and carers to ensure that these pupils attend school regularly.

Until recently, governors and trustees have not provided adequate challenge to leaders about the quality of education on offer to pupils across the school. Positive steps have been taken to strengthen governance. However, this strategy is still in its infancy with little evidence of impact.

Leaders, trustees and governors ensure that staff's well-being is considered. Staff feel that leaders are supportive and approachable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know each pupil and their families extremely well. Staff are well trained to spot any changes in a pupil's behaviour or physical appearance that might indicate that they are at risk of harm. Staff report concerns promptly, and leaders take appropriate action to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the help that they need. Leaders are aware of the safeguarding risks within the local area. They ensure that pupils know how to avoid becoming embroiled in gang-related activities, including those that cross county lines.

Pupils are taught how to live healthy lives and how to keep themselves safe when using the internet for work or play.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in many subjects, including in the early years, is not ambitious or well organised. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, do not build up their knowledge across the curriculum to prepare them well for their next stages of education. Leaders must design and implement a curriculum that enables children in the early years, and pupils across the rest of the school, to achieve well.
- Leaders do not ensure that all children in the early years, and pupils in key stage 1, receive the support that they need to develop secure reading knowledge. These pupils struggle to read fluently as they progress through the school. Leaders must ensure that all pupils benefit from effective delivery of the school's reading programme so that they read with confidence and fluency.
- Leaders do not ensure that teachers find out and address the gaps that pupils have in their knowledge. This results in pupils developing misconceptions or failing to learn essential facts. Leaders must make sure that teachers identify the gaps in pupils' learning and then reshape their teaching to help pupils gain missed or forgotten knowledge.

- The capacity to bring about sustained improvement rests too heavily on the headteacher. This limits leaders from tackling the shortcomings in the quality of education that children in the early years, and pupils across the rest of the school, receive. Leaders and those responsible for governance must extend the leadership capacity within the school to bring about the necessary changes.

Having considered the evidence, inspectors strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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.

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	148698
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10275152
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the trust	John Murray
Headteacher	Lucy Bone
Website	www.st-cuthberts-windermere.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- A large proportion of pupils at this school have lived in other countries before they began at the school. Many pupils speak English as an additional language.
- St Cuthberts Catholic Primary School, Windermere converted to become an academy school in September 2021. When its predecessor school, St Cuthbert's RC Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2023.
- The school belongs to the Diocese of Lancaster. The last section 48 inspection took place in March 2022.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. Inspectors deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same

Act. The initial inspection was conducted by an allocated team of inspectors. When the inspection was deemed, a new team conducted the remainder of the inspection a day later, adding to the evidence gathered by the original team. An additional visit was made to the school on 4 May 2023 to gather additional evidence.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. They spoke with a small group of governors.
- An inspector spoke with members of the multi-academy trust board. They also spoke with the chief executive officer for the trust and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included the school's central record of staff and visitors, staff training records, records of safeguarding and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar member of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. Inspectors scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. There were too few responses to Ofsted Parent View for inspectors to consider. Inspectors did take account of parents' free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Perkins	His Majesty's Inspector
Amina Modan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Olsson

His Majesty's Inspector

Nick Capron

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023