

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Highfield

Whinfield Way, Highfield, Rowlands Gill, Tyne and Wear NE39 2JE

Inspection date:

14 September 2023

Outcome

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Highfield continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School are confident, kind and welcoming. They enjoy coming to school. Leaders, staff and governors know their school community well. Pupils feel happy and safe in school.

The school regularly reviews the content of the curriculum to ensure it is ambitious and fit for purpose. The school's high expectations of learning are shared by all staff and governors. They want all pupils to do well, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are proud of their achievements, and rise to the high expectations of the school.

Across the school, pupils are calm and focused. Pupils understand the expectations staff have for their behaviour. Pupils engage in healthy discussions, showing empathy and understanding of each other's needs.

Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they have in school. Being on the school council or a buddy to new starters are roles that are celebrated. Other learning opportunities, such as guitar and gardening club or visits to local landmarks linked to Roman history, are also embraced by pupils.

Parents are positive about the school. They appreciate how well leaders and staff know their children. One parent reflected, 'This school has a lovely ethos, and not only my child but their classmates are happy and contented children.'

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. The curriculum is underpinned with regular training for staff to ensure that all pupils are well supported, including pupils with SEND.

In reading, pupils make a positive start to phonics. Pupils read books that are matched closely to the sounds that they know. This is building pupils' confidence in reading well. Children in the early years make a prompt start to reading by learning the initial sounds and new vocabulary to match them. Staff show sound subject knowledge to help pupils build and read more accurately over time. The school's chosen phonics scheme is taught with consistency by staff. Pupils succeed in the familiar structure of each lesson. Carefully chosen books connect the reading curriculum to wider curriculum subjects like history. Pupils enjoy reading their class novels. Children in the early years listen attentively to class stories and join in when singing rhymes. The school uses national events well to further broaden pupils' experience of books.

The school's mathematics curriculum is carefully planned out. The small steps pupils need to be successful mathematicians are clear. This planning starts in the early years so that pupils are ready for the key stage 1 mathematics curriculum. Opportunities to revisit learning are in place. Pupils talk with confidence about their learning and explain mathematical concepts accurately. Adaptations are made to support all pupils to achieve well. This ensures that pupils keep up with their peers. Staff benefit from ongoing training in mathematics to ensure their subject knowledge is sound. In wider curriculum subjects, like geography, new curriculum plans set out clearly what the school wants pupils to know and remember. Pupils talk confidently about where different countries are, showing their understanding of locational knowledge. This curriculum planning does not clearly consider how pupils progress in mixed-year classes. Leaders know the further detail needed to strengthen these new curriculum plans. The school's assessment strategies to check what pupils know and remember are not fully embedded into the teaching sequences.

The school identifies pupils with SEND promptly. Pupils with SEND receive dedicated support from the school. The school is ambitious in the aims it has for pupils with SEND. Training and the use of additional professionals to support pupils are carefully planned. Leaders and staff understand how to support pupils with SEND well.

The school is proud of its pupils. The relationships between staff and pupils are caring and thoughtful. The local community is well understood by those who work in the school. Pupils are polite and courteous around school. In class, pupils learn in calm environments. They show tolerance of each other. This is an inclusive school where all are welcomed and valued. Pupils understand how staff support them in different ways. This includes adapting resources and giving pupils a chance to talk about their emotions. Children in the early years make a positive start to understanding school routines and expectations. This continues as pupils move up through the school. A range of school visits and after-school clubs are enjoyed by pupils, including pupils with SEND. Pupils talk maturely about a range of topics, such as how to make healthy lifestyle choices, community safety and consent. Pupils know and understand what equality is. They understand fundamental

British values, such as democracy. The curriculum for personal, social and health education helps pupils understand life beyond school.

Staff appreciate the way that the school prioritises keeping workload manageable for the team. Leaders, including governors, have made the well-being of staff and pupils a high priority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, such as geography, the new curriculum does not clearly plan the progression of skills and disciplinary understanding needed in mixed-age classes. In these subjects, pupils are not challenged to know more and remember more sufficiently well as they progress through the curriculum. The school must further develop curriculum planning to reflect disciplinary aspects of the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils well.
- Assessment procedures to check what pupils know and remember are not fully embedded. Leaders do not have a clear understanding of what pupils know and remember in some subjects. The school must embed strategies for assessment to ensure that pupils are building knowledge and understanding over time.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2013.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108391
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10269222
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Bradley
Headteacher	Joanna Bircham
Website	http://stjosephshighfield.org/
Date of previous inspection	15 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Roman Catholic faith primary school. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in November 2018. The school is part of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.
- The school shares a site and building with another primary school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and teaching assistants. They spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils at the early stages of reading read with a familiar adult.
- To evaluate safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff, pupils and a range of stakeholders, including governors. Safeguarding documentation was scrutinised, including the safeguarding policies, and the single central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults. Inspectors also met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors gathered views of parents informally in person and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with them. Pupils' views were considered through a pupil survey and through pupil meetings.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the governing body, the diocese and the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes, during breaks and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie McGrane

Ofsted Inspector

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