

Inspection of St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, Prudhoe

Highfield Lane, Prudhoe, Northumberland NE42 6EY

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Martin Gray. This school is part of Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nick Hurn OBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Angela Boyle.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school where pupils are nurtured and supported to be confident learners. The changes that the school has made to the curriculum are paying off. Pupils remember the important knowledge the school wants them to know well. Pupils achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. From the start of school life, in early years, children are taught the vocabulary that they need to communicate effectively. Staff model positive relationships. This helps pupils to get along when they play together. The school encourages pupils to describe their feelings and talk about their worries. Pupils know who to talk to when they need help. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils value their school and the local community. They work with local charities to support fundraising and provide food for families. This is helping pupils to be caring citizens. Pupils celebrate difference through a range of approaches deliberately planned into the curriculum. For example, the school's series of assemblies, called 'Lifesong Legacies', helps pupils to learn about the lives of significant individuals, such as American slave abolitionist Harriet Tubman. Pupils demonstrate high levels of respect and tolerance.

The school ensures that there is a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular experiences for all pupils. Sports clubs such as tag rugby, netball and archery are helping to build pupils' health and fitness.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For each subject, the curriculum is clearly sequenced for every year group, including early years. The school ensures that staff receive training to help them teach the curriculum. Pupils are ably supported to remember the important knowledge that they need for future learning.

The curriculum starts in nursery. Children regularly sing songs and rhymes. They learn to recognise and count to five. This helps to prepare children in Reception to learn number bonds to 10 and 20 in mathematics. In phonics and mathematics, the school makes checks on how well pupils remember important knowledge. The curriculums in some foundation subjects, such as geography, have been revised to ensure that pupils remember the most important knowledge over time. The school has not made checks to see whether pupils remember the identified important knowledge. Leaders have started to develop systems for checking pupils' knowledge of the revised foundation curriculum subjects.

Teachers use their expert knowledge to break down learning into small steps. In art and design, for example, pupils practise sketching techniques before drawing figures. Staff provide immediate feedback to address pupils' misconceptions. This

helps pupils to improve their work so that they do not develop gaps in their knowledge. Some younger pupils struggle to write. Pupils do not receive the support and feedback they need to help them to improve their spelling and handwriting consistently. These pupils are not well prepared for future learning.

Pupils like reading a wide range of quality texts. 'Reading breakfasts' for pupils, parents and carers run every half term. Pupils enjoy discussing their favourite books at these sessions. Pupils love the online stories on 'Tucked up Thursday', where they listen to leaders reading their favourite books. These activities are helping pupils to develop a love of books. Staff skilfully teach pupils the phonics knowledge they need to be successful readers. They help pupils to catch up if they fall behind in their reading. Books are well matched to pupils' phonics knowledge. This is helping pupils to read fluently.

The school ensures that pupils with SEND take part in all aspects of school life. Leaders make careful checks to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff seek advice from external professionals such as speech and language therapists. This ensures that pupils with SEND are fully supported to access all subjects across the ambitious curriculum. Staff make sure that pupils with SEND receive the precise support that they need to help them learn. As a result, pupils with SEND are well prepared for future learning.

The school's behaviour curriculum, 'ready, respectful and safe', is followed extremely well by pupils. Pupils are calm and focus on their learning well. Low-level disruption is extremely rare. If it happens, staff are swift to deal with it. Pupils behave beautifully at St Matthew's. Support for families to ensure that pupils attend school is exceptional. As a result, pupils have high attendance.

The opportunities for pupils' personal development are exemplary. Leaders ensure that the curriculum for personal, social and health education is preparing pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. This includes helping pupils to understand how to keep safe when working and playing online. There are many opportunities to develop pupils' talents and interests. For instance, older pupils enjoy participating in the 'Shakespeare School's Festival' annually. Pupils are proud to be sports leaders and ambassadors for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Governors make regular visits to the school. They check that leaders' actions benefit all pupils. Governors support and challenge leaders incisively. Staff feel valued. They enjoy working in a supportive team. Leaders at all levels, including trust leaders, ensure that staff are supported to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not implemented systems to assess pupils' knowledge in a small number of recently revised foundation subjects. In these subjects, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not identified and addressed. The school should ensure that systems are in place to check how well gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and addressed in all subjects of the curriculum.
- The school does not address younger pupils' misconceptions in writing well. This means that these pupils are not prepared well enough to write as they progress through the school. Leaders must ensure that staff check pupils' misconceptions in writing and provide timely and clear feedback.

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	141828
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10290276
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Angela Boyle (interim chair)
Headteacher	Martin Gray
Website	www.stmatthewsprudhoe.org
Date of previous inspection	17 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of 47 schools in the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust. The school joined the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust in April 2020.
- The school is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The last inspection of the school's religious character (section 48) was in July 2023. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last.
- The school has nursery provision for two- and three-year-old children.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2019.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The lead inspector also met with the special educational needs coordinator and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with governors and spoke to a trustee and the deputy director of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and design, and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also talked to parents to gain their views of the school.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Mitchinson	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Parker	Ofsted Inspector

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