

Inspection of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Esh Winning

Durham Road, Esh Winning, Durham DH7 9PA

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Louise Keenan. 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. There is also an executive headteacher, Gabrielle Lynch, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There has been significant instability in staffing and leadership in the school in recent months. The new executive headteacher is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. Leaders from the trust have reviewed the school's curriculum. They have very recently introduced new subject curriculums. Pupils find learning interesting. However, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders know that there is more to be done to ensure that pupils catch up.

There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the school. Pupils are happy to see staff greet them at the gate. Pupils show respect to each other and the staff who help them. A consistent approach to behaviour helps pupils to make the right choice. As a result, pupils behave well. This helps pupils to learn. At breaktimes, there are many games to occupy pupils. Staff are on hand to resolve any issues. This helps pupils to feel safe.

The school plans a range of experiences to help develop pupils' talents and interests. Older pupils enjoy playing wheelchair basketball. Younger pupils participate in ballet lessons. They visit the Durham Gala Theatre to discuss dance with the Northern Ballet.

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

The recent changes to leadership mean that some leaders are in new roles. Leaders have identified much-needed improvements. However, these priorities are not well understood by all leaders. Many changes are not embedded. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Trust leaders have introduced new curriculums in most subjects, including core subjects. The important knowledge and vocabulary that leaders want pupils to learn are well sequenced. The curriculums include clear end points. However, these curriculums are not fully in place. Some pupils have misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. Occasionally, the work given to pupils does not help pupils to build on prior learning. Opportunities to check what pupils know and understand across all subjects are often missed. The school has not had time to thoroughly check how effectively the new curriculums are being taught. This means that some pupils are not sufficiently prepared for the next stage of education.

In early years, children get off to a strong start. The early years leader has expert knowledge about each area of learning. Staff make careful checks on children's understanding. They use assessment well to identify children's starting points. For example, assessments highlighted that children struggle to use writing tools and scissors. Staff use this information to plan activities such as pegging socks together to make pairs. In mathematics, children sit together to find out which items could fit in a box. Staff use the language that they want children to learn to describe the size of objects. This helps children to build their vocabulary.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading and phonics. Younger pupils take part in daily phonics sessions. Older pupils learn through carefully structured reading lessons. Pupils practise reading often. This is helping pupils to learn to read fluently. At the end of the school day, pupils across the school enjoy listening to stories. Teachers model reading well. This is helping pupils to develop their own understanding of vocabulary.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in school. Leaders have set sharply focused targets for pupils so that it is clear what pupils need to learn and when. This is helping pupils to learn alongside their peers in the classroom. Despite this, some parents and carers feel that the school is not giving their children the support they need to succeed. The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is starting to involve parents and carers in deciding how best to support pupils with SEND.

The school has a carefully planned curriculum for pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to be tolerant of those with different viewpoints to their own. They talk confidently about a range of faiths and cultures. Pupils learn about democracy through activities such as elections for 'Minnie Vinnies' and the school council. The school organises opportunities for pupils to participate in charity work. This includes collecting food for harvest and participating in the fun run for St Joseph's Hospice. Pupils are learning to care for the local community.

The priorities for improving the school are not known by leaders at all levels. The systems to monitor these improvements and priorities are not in place for all staff. Staff appreciate the changes that leaders have made to the curriculum. Leaders continue to build the expertise of staff through training. Staff appreciate the support that they are receiving. Most staff enjoy working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculums for all subjects are not implemented as intended by the school. This means that pupils are not learning and remembering the key knowledge that has been identified on curriculum plans. The school should ensure that expectations for teaching the curriculum are clear to teachers so that the quality of teaching consistently supports pupils to remember the content long term.
- The checks the school makes on pupils' learning do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge sufficiently well. This means that some pupils have misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge as they progress through school. The school should ensure that staff know how to use assessment effectively so that pupils keep up with their learning.

- The school's communication with parents is variable. Parents do not receive consistent feedback to help them understand their child's school experience. This includes parents of pupils with SEND. The school needs to ensure that it involves parents effectively.
- The vision for improvement set by leaders at all levels is not fully established. This is reducing the timeliness and effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve important areas of provision. The school should ensure that all leaders and staff are clear about the current school improvement priorities so that all staff understand their part in enacting improvements and measuring success.

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	148206
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10269179
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Angela Boyle (Interim Chair)
Headteacher	Louise Keenan
Website	www.olqmstj.durham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is one of 47 schools in the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust. The school joined the trust in November 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 May 2017. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last.
- The executive headteacher took up post in October 2023.
- 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 executive headteacher and head of school. The lead inspector also met with the SENCo and the deputy chief executive officer of the trust. The lead inspector met with governors and spoke to a trustee and the deputy director for education of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics 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 English and geography.
- 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 the staff survey and Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. An inspector also talked to parents to gain their views of the school.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Katie Lowe	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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