

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Chester-Le-Street

Ropery Lane, Chester le Street, County Durham DH3 3PH

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2023

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

The headteacher of this school is Angela Garrity. 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 the interim chair, Angela Boyle.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's mantra, 'Be yourself, but be it very well', is lived out by all who are part of the St Cuthbert's family. It is clear that everybody matters here. Pupils have an enthusiasm for school that is apparent to all. They enjoy coming to their school, where they feel happy and safe. Pupils thrive because adults value and support them well.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. The curriculum is well considered and carefully planned. In most cases, the new learning pupils' experience builds on what they already know. Teachers encourage pupils to think deeply about the things that they learn.

Pupils demonstrate consistently high standards of behaviour. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They demonstrate tolerance and respect for others. Staff ensure that classrooms are calm and purposeful places where pupils can thrive in their learning. Pupils move around the school with independence and maturity.

The school's personal development curriculum encourages pupils to make a positive contribution to the wider community. Pupils value the range of opportunities to broaden their horizons and extend their interests, such as through the school's work with the Junior Duke Award.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious and well designed. In subjects such as art and science, leaders have clearly set out what pupils need to know and understand at each stage of their learning. The same high ambition is clear in the newly introduced geography and modern foreign languages curriculums. These subjects are at an early stage of implementation and leaders recognise the importance of maintaining close and careful monitoring to ensure that all pupils learn and remember the subject knowledge that they need. In MFL, all pupils learn the same ambitious vocabulary in Years 3 and 4. They can then apply this learning further in later years. However, in geography, older pupils do not have the opportunity to be introduced to some of the more ambitious subject concepts within the school's new curriculum that will prepare them well for Year 7 and beyond.

The school ensures that teachers have good subject knowledge and the ability to teach their subjects well. Teachers present curriculum content with clarity and pupils routinely revisit previous learning to reinforce their understanding. The school swiftly identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' needs are met well through effective academic and pastoral support. This enables all pupils to learn the curriculum successfully.

Staff help pupils to develop a love of reading. Children learn to read as soon as they start school. The phonics curriculum is taught consistently well. This enables pupils to develop the knowledge and skills that they need to be confident, fluent readers.

Pupils further extend their reading skills through the school's newly developed reading fluency programme. Pupils rise consistently to the high expectations set by adults. They commit themselves to their learning and show wholly respectful attitudes towards adults and to each other. This contributes significantly to pupils' ability to learn and achieve. From the start, the school encourages pupils to reflect on their own behaviour and think about the rights of others. This is further reflected through the school's commitment to the 'Rights Respecting Schools Award'.

The school's personal development curriculum is a strength. Leaders take every opportunity to help pupils understand themselves and the world around them. Pupils learn about mental and physical health and about the importance of healthy relationships. They learn about democracy by electing pupil councillors to the school council, eco-council and 'Mini Vinnies' groups. This learning is cemented through their visits to the Houses of Parliament. Pupils learn to demonstrate compassion and respect for others through the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum. They make regular contributions to their local community by raising money for local causes and carrying out community litter picks.

There is a strong team spirit at St Cuthbert's School. Staff feel well supported by leaders, governors and the trust. Staff appreciate the professional development opportunities they receive and leaders' consideration for their workload and well-being. Staff are highly motivated and morale is high. One staff member stated, 'There is a clear enjoyment to working in the school.' The trust and governing board provide appropriate support and challenge to all members of the school to help them continually improve. The school communicates effectively with parents to support pupils' education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the curriculum in some foundation subjects is at an early stage. The school should continue its work to check that all pupils learn the relevant knowledge and skills in these subjects to ensure that they are ready for the next stage of their learning.

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	148259
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10269180
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	202
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Interim chair of trust	Angela Boyle
CEO of the trust	Nick Hurn OBE
Headteacher	Angela Garrity
Website	www.st-cuthbertsrc-chester-le-street.durham.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy within Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust in December 2020. When its predecessor school, St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is a Catholic primary school within the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in April 2018.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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 members of the local governing committee, the special educational needs coordinator and other senior leaders. Inspectors also spoke with the interim chair of the trust and a representative of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and MFL. 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in 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 gathered the views of parents, staff and pupils through Ofsted's questionnaires and through meetings across the two days of inspection.

Inspection team

Lynn Chambers, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Martin Featherstone

Ofsted Inspector

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