

Inspection of St Columba's Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Tong Street, Dudley Hill, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD4 9PY

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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 Anna Gautrey. This school is part of Blessed Christopher Wharton Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Andrew Morley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joe McDonnell.

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone receives a warm welcome at St Columba's Catholic Primary School. Pupils show respect to each other and to adults. Pupils know that it does not matter what your beliefs, background or skin colour are, everyone must be respected.

The school creates an environment where pupils feel safe. The school roots its behaviour system in its Catholic ethos. Parents, carers, staff and pupils chose the five virtues that exemplify the school's behaviour expectations. Pupils know and apply these virtues in their daily behaviour. For example, pupils know that to 'be wise' means to pay attention and listen.

The school has developed its curriculum since academisation. Leaders make continual refinements to improve pupils' attainment.

The school's extra-curricular clubs are purposefully selected to develop pupils' skills, such as by playing board games.

Pupils and families access high-quality pastoral support through the school's nurture and home school support service. Pupils receive effective emotional and practical support.

The early years provision enables children from two years old to access activities that stimulate play and exploration. Adults sensitively support children to make choices and play cooperatively.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 'the nest', provides bespoke learning support for young pupils with communication and interaction needs.

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

The school has redesigned its curriculum so that each unit of work starts with a question. In some subjects, the school has effectively broken down the learning into small steps. This means that pupils learn the right knowledge in the right order to enable them to answer the question. In other subjects, the school is improving this curriculum planning. This is to ensure that the curriculum accurately builds on pupils' prior learning over time.

The school focuses on developing pupils' language and communication skills. Most pupils with SEND have speech, language and communication needs. Adults remind pupils to 'add, build and challenge' when they respond to a question. The school produces knowledge mats for pupils for each unit. These mats include essential vocabulary to support pupils in discussions. However, this vocabulary does not consistently match the subject-specific words which the school has identified in its vocabulary progression structure. This means pupils are not supported well to recall the most important vocabulary.

The school ensures that lessons start with opportunities to recap previous learning. Checks are completed on what pupils know and remember in all subjects. This ensures that the school has a clear understanding of the progress that pupils make.

The crucial knowledge that pupils need to learn as they move through school is mapped in subjects such as mathematics. There are many opportunities for pupils to deepen and apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. Leaders have high expectations for pupils. Pupils explain how work they did in previous years is helping them to understand, use and apply new learning.

The school has identified the lack of reading practice at home as a barrier to increasing pupils' reading fluency. Workshops for parents and carers have been provided to model how to support pupils' early reading skills. There is a structure to phonics sessions that is consistent across the school. Reading books match the sounds that pupils know. Pupils show resilience in using their phonics knowledge to sound out new and unfamiliar words. The school checks the sounds that pupils remember every half term. This information is used to organise phonics catch-up sessions.

There is a high proportion of pupils with SEND on roll. These pupils' needs are identified quickly. The school supports pupils with SEND well in the nest, the nurture provision or the sensory room. The staff receive regular and specialist support from the local authority. This support improves their knowledge and skills. In classrooms, adults support pupils with SEND to access the same work as their peers.

The curriculum in early years is carefully considered to build from children's entry at two years old to the end of their Reception Year. The school works with families to ensure staff understand the needs of the children as they join the school. There is a sharp focus on developing children's language and communication skills. Adults create and lead activities that excite and engage children.

The school's social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum is underpinned by its Catholic ethos and virtues. This effectively supports pupils to develop character traits such as resilience and independence. Pupils are provided with opportunities to be leaders. For example, some are school councillors, playground leaders and reading ambassadors. Pupils know how to stay physically healthy by eating vegetables, drinking water and exercising. However, pupils are less confident about knowing how to keep mentally healthy.

The school supports the well-being of the staff. The impact on staff workload, when introducing new initiatives, is considered carefully. The trust understands the school's strengths and areas requiring further development. It recognises the improvements the school has made in recent years in establishing consistency of practice and raising its ambition for pupils.

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 in the curriculum, the school has not planned out the small steps of content that pupils need to learn. This means that in these subjects, teachers do not know which content to deliver next. Leaders should ensure that sequences of learning in each subject are clear.
- The school has not matched the vocabulary on the curriculum knowledge mats to the subject-specific vocabulary identified by the school for each year group. This means the vocabulary that pupils use does not match the vocabulary the school wants them to learn precisely. The school should ensure that the knowledge mats reflect the essential vocabulary for each unit of 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	148258
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10297505
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	420
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joe McDonnell
Headteacher	Anna Gautrey
Website	www.stcolumbas.bradford.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Blessed Christopher Wharton Catholic Academy Trust in March 2021.
- The school is a Roman Catholic primary school. The most recent inspection of the school's religious character took place in January 2023.
- The school has nursery provision for two- and three-year-old children.
- The school has a SEND resource base. The next is a provision for early years and Year 1 pupils with communication and interaction needs.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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, curriculum leaders, staff and pupils.
- Meetings were also held with the interim chair of the academy council, a delegate for the CEO and the chair of the trust, and a foundation trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design technology, 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The views of parents, staff and pupils were considered from meeting with them and from the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Peter Heaton	Ofsted Inspector
Kerry Partington	Ofsted Inspector

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