

Inspection of a good school: St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Harris Street, Darlington, County Durham DL1 4NL

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 February 2024

Outcome

St Teresa's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Paula Strachan. This school is part of Bishop Hogarth 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, Mike Shorten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school where everyone lives by the school's virtues which include 'compassion' and 'respect'. The school is committed to improving opportunities for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are proud to be part of the school community. They value the staff who help them. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe.

The school has high ambitions for all pupils. Pupils achieve well, particularly in mathematics. Strong relationships between pupils and staff ensure the support for pupils' learning and personal development is highly effective.

Pupils listen carefully in lessons and work hard to meet teachers' high expectations. Pupils are rightly proud of their exemplary behaviour. They follow the school's rules consistently well. Occasional incidents of inappropriate behaviour are followed up with helpful conversations which help pupils to improve their conduct.

The school makes sure that pupils celebrate the diverse cultures represented in the school. For example, pupils enjoyed listening to and meeting with Richard O'Neill, an author of Romani Heritage.

'St Teresa's Squads' ensure pupils have a say in the decisions made by the school. For example, the reading squad keep pupils up to date with the latest books on offer.

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

Since academisation, the school has revised the curriculum to better reflect the local area

and the diverse range of cultures represented in the school. The school has identified the important learning that pupils must know at the end of each unit of work. This ensures that pupils build knowledge as they progress through the school. For example, in history, pupils in Year 2 learn about the life of Captain Cook. They compare Cook's life with the lives of explorers from other periods in history such as Neil Armstrong. This helps pupils to understand and develop historical perspective by making connections between local, national and international history.

Pupils sometimes move away and return to the school later in the year. The school adapts the curriculum well depending on gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils are supported effectively to catch up. Over time, pupils are well prepared for future learning.

The mathematics curriculum has been adapted to ensure that all pupils, including those in mixed-age classes, learn extremely well. Pupils start each lesson with rapid recall tasks such as rehearsing multiplication tables. This helps pupils to become fluent in their knowledge of number. They use this knowledge in other areas of mathematics, such as multiplying two-digit and three-digit numbers using formal written methods. Teachers check pupils' understanding often. They make sure misconceptions are resolved quickly. As a result, pupils make exceptional progress in mathematics.

Learning to read is a priority in the school. In Nursery, children enjoy learning rhymes and playing games to help them recognise words with the same initial sound. This helps to prepare children for phonics in Reception. Across the school, pupils read widely and often. Story times are treasured by pupils. They enjoy reading high-quality texts such as 'The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips' by Michael Morpurgo. Pupils become confident and enthusiastic readers as they progress through the school. Daily phonics teaching ensures that pupils learn the letter sounds and how to blend these sounds into words. Pupils' phonics knowledge is assessed to see how well pupils remember. The school provides effective support for those who have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Despite this, misconceptions in reading and writing are not identified and addressed often enough for some pupils.

The school ensures that pupils with SEND get the right support. Where possible, pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as everyone else. Pupils' individual needs are accurately identified. As a result, learning is adapted in lessons to ensure pupils with SEND are well prepared for the next steps in education.

In early years, effective routines are established as soon as children start. Children learn to share, take turns and work together. In lessons, older pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well. Pupils understand the importance of attending school. They enjoy the rewards on offer such as earning St Teresa's 'money' for high attendance. Pupils 'spend' their money on a range of experiences. However, some pupils miss learning because they are absent or late too often.

The school's wider development offer is exceptional. Pupils benefit from a range of clubs such as football, table tennis and woodwork. They enjoy playing sports at the local cricket and football grounds. The work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. This includes, for example, the school's development of 'The

Brainy Bunch' mental health curriculum. This supports pupils' mental resilience and emotional well-being.

Leaders on all levels are champions for pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds. They make sure that actions taken by the school improve provision to benefit all pupils. Staff appreciate the support and professional development on offer. They value being part of a team that is considerate of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, in the teaching of phonics, pupils' misconceptions are not identified often enough as they learn to read and write. This means that a few pupils do not move on to the next steps in learning as quickly as they should. The school should ensure that all staff have the expertise to prepare pupils for future learning.
- Some pupils miss too much learning through absence or being late. These pupils have some gaps in their knowledge. The school should ensure that its work with pupils and their families results in improved attendance and punctuality for pupils.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Teresa's RC Primary School, to be good in January 2016.

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	146256
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10297453
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	354
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Paula Strachan
Website	www.stteresasprimary.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust.
- The school is designated as having a religious character. This means that it is inspected under section 48 of the education Act 2005. The most recent section 48 inspection of this school was in January 2023. The school's next religious character inspection will take place before January 2031.
- St Teresa's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in September 2019. When it's predecessor school, St Teresa's RC Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school has an after-school club run by an external provider.

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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. Meetings were also held with subject leaders, teachers and early careers teachers.
- The inspector met with representatives of the trust, including the chief executive officer (CEO), a deputy CEO and director or the trust board. The inspector also met with members of the local governing committee, including the chair.
- The inspector spoke to the acting director of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on the telephone.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector also observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector also talked to parents to gain their views of the school.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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