

# Inspection of a good school: St Mark's Catholic Primary School, Westerhope

Bardon Close, Westerhope, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE5 4BT

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Inspection dates:

28 and 29 February 2024

## Outcome

St Mark's Catholic Primary School, Westerhope continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Kate McKenna. This school is part of Bishop Bewick 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, Anita Bath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Harrison.

## What is it like to attend this school?

St Mark's Catholic Primary School is a happy and caring community. Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength. All staff model behaviour expectations consistently. Pupils understand these expectations. They respond well to the routines and directions set by the teachers. As a result, pupils' conduct in school is calm and polite. In lessons, pupils are well motivated and engage in their learning. Throughout the school, pupils treat each other and staff with respect. In group discussions, pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

Leaders are passionate that all pupils have the best possible start in education. The school embraces disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This starts with the children in the nursery provision. They are happy and curious in their learning activities. Adults cater well for the youngest children's social and physical needs. By the time pupils leave school, they are well prepared for their next stage in education.

Pupils spoken with are appreciative of the prayer room and the time spent there. One commented, 'It doesn't matter what religion you are, you can spend time praying'. Pupils view this as a private space where they can be still and reflective.

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

There has been a period of rapid change in the last academic year to improve standards in all areas of the school. These changes include more ambitious curriculums for mathematics and phonics. The guidance for teachers in these subjects is making teaching more consistent. It is improving the quality of pupils' education.

Pupils learn to read through a highly structured phonics programme. The books that pupils read closely match the sounds that they know. This helps pupils to become fluent readers. Some pupils have gaps in their learning from the previous phonics curriculum. Leaders ensure that these pupils are catching up with their peers. They do this through additional phonics sessions. The reading books used in lessons reflect a range of different cultures and genres. Pupils enjoy choosing books from the revamped school library.

The mathematics curriculum is well structured, so that pupils build on their prior knowledge. In lessons, teachers continually check what pupils know. They are adept in checking for any misconceptions. They modify work to meet individual needs. The regular recaps at the start of lessons help pupils remember more. Older pupils can articulate their mathematical learning with confidence. They are well prepared for the key stage 3 mathematics curriculum.

The curriculum offer for the wider subject areas is being revised. Staff are teaching the revised curriculum guidance for geography. There are some inconsistencies in terms of pupils' experience in geography. In some classes there is a highly effective learning sequence. Pupils connect new learning to the knowledge that they already have. They talk enthusiastically about their knowledge and can remember key concepts. However, sometimes the expectations of pupils varies. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for pupils to experience geography fieldwork skills. This limits their understanding of data handling and physical processes.

Pupils with SEND are involved in all aspects of school life. When needed, teachers make adaptations that help pupils with SEND learn well. For example, they support with reading. Staff work closely with families of children with SEND. They help parents and carers support their child.

There is a clear curriculum for early years, however some of the learning activities do not match its ambition. Adults sometimes miss opportunities to develop children's learning in the continuous provision. This means that some children in the early years do not develop their knowledge and skills as well as they could in some areas of learning. There is an emphasis on introducing children to a wide selection of books. Children delight in joining in with repeating phrases and following the stories.

Staff teach pupils to be respectful to all, including those of different backgrounds and faiths. Pupils are knowledgeable about the major world religions. External partners support staff in delivering a strong personal, social and health education curriculum. This includes guidance for pupils on how to keep safe both on and offline. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as becoming a member of the 'Mini Vinnies' or the 'Class Council'.

The trust and school have a mutually beneficial relationship. The trust is supportive of the changes made to the curriculum design and delivery. Teachers attend the many training and networking opportunities provided by the trust. School staff contribute to trust wide practice, for example, on supporting pupils with SEND. Governors and the trust receive the information that they need to make strategic decisions and hold leaders to account.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### What does the school need to do to improve?

#### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in the early years is not implemented as thoroughly as the school intends. This means that some children in the early years do not develop their knowledge and skills as well as they could in some areas of learning. The school should ensure that the activities and resources chosen to deliver the early years curriculum maximise children's opportunities to develop their learning.
- Leaders are in the process of further revising the curriculum. The intent and ambitions of the curriculum are clear. However, the guidance for teachers is less detailed in some subject areas such as geography. This leads to some inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum guidance contains the level of detail that staff need to fully deliver the intended curriculum.

## 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 Mark's RC Primary School, good in July 2019.

### 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148443
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297524
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Harrison
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate McKenna
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmcps.org">www.stmcps.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.
- The school is a member of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and has a Christian character. It is, therefore, also inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The diocese last carried out a section 48 inspection in January 2020.

## 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Meetings were also held with subject leaders, class teachers and pupils. Further meetings were held with early career teachers.
- The inspector met also with representatives of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust and the local governing board.

- The inspector carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector looked at curriculum planning, conducted joint lesson visits with leaders, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at pupils' books and samples of their work.
- Prior to the inspection, the inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, around the school and at breaktime. She spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- 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 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector took the views of staff into account through a number of meetings as well as their responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

## **Inspection team**

Mary Cook, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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