

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

Parkfield Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 3SY

Inspection dates:

12 to 13 March 2024

Outcome

St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Stockton continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Sian Parnell. This school is part of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust. Other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive here. They are nurtured and supported by a dedicated staff team which recognises that many of their families face wider challenges in their everyday lives.

Pupils relish the responsibilities bestowed upon them. The 'reading squad' exemplifies this. They undertake their role to raise the profile of reading across the school with much enthusiasm. They talk excitedly about their ambitious plans to refurbish the reading garden.

Playtimes and lunchtimes are fun filled. There is so much to do and enjoy. The 'dance squad' prepares dance routines for younger pupils to master, who brim with excitement as they join in. At the same time, the sports leaders look to improve pupils' ball skills by giving expert tips. High staff to pupil ratios ensure all activities are well supervised. This contributes to the strong and trusting relationships that exist in the school.

Pupils behave exceptionally well most of the time. Very occasionally, the school uses suspension as a sanction. This is always used appropriately and sensitively and as a last resort.

The school has high aspirations for all its pupils. These were not realised in 2023 when pupils' outcomes in the end of key stage 2 national tests fell below national averages.

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

The school is not complacent, always seeking to improve pupils' outcomes and to strengthen practice. A comprehensive review of curriculums for reading and mathematics was completed last school year. This led to substantial curriculum adaptations.

A new scheme is now implemented to develop pupils' wider reading skills. There is clarity on what pupils will learn and when they will learn it. The rich texts that accompany the scheme are highly engaging. Online texts and quizzes promote pupils' love of reading well. Pupils' work in books and during lessons reflects good progress.

Early reading is well structured. In the early years, children start their reading journey with lots of rhymes and songs. Pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters make builds on from this systematically. Pupils practise their reading with books well matched to their phonics knowledge. For those pupils who do not read regularly at home, the school does all it can to support them.

Adaptations to the mathematics curriculum have prioritised securing pupils' mathematical fluency. More time is now afforded for pupils to recall and practise their arithmetic skills. Staff regularly check that pupils have learned what was intended. As a result, pupils are secure in their calculation methods. While the curriculum for mathematical reasoning is carefully constructed, it does not have the same impact on pupils' learning. Pupils are much less assured in making connections between mathematical facts and to give reasons about them. This is because it is not taught as rigorously as the school expects.

The school uses the trust's schemes of work for foundation subjects. The history curriculum identifies the key knowledge pupils will learn step by step. Important knowledge is recapped each lesson to help pupils to remember more of what they have learned. Additional resources, created by the school, supplement the core offer effectively. For example, the 'route map' shows how different periods of history overlap. This provides a visual cue to support pupils' understanding of chronology. Links within the early years curriculum are less well planned. Activities intended to secure important knowledge sometimes lack the precision needed to do so.

The school identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They ensure that pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers successfully. They make the necessary adaptations to the curriculum to support this.

Pupils benefit from a rich and extensive personal development curriculum. The recently introduced 'enrichment passport' tracks pupils' cultural experiences. It ensures that all pupils receive the same opportunities. Intelligent use of contextualised issues informs the safeguarding aspects of the curriculum particularly well. The school's work with local community groups is exemplary. It has been pivotal in transforming some pupils' lives.

Improving pupils' attendance is high priority for the school. Leaders cited poor attendance as a contributing factor to pupils' outcomes in 2023. While leaders are empathetic and understanding of circumstance, they are clear that they challenge poor attendance.

Current attendance figures show a marked improvement and are sitting above last year's national averages.

Staff are proud members of the school community. They value the training opportunities they receive and the school's commitment to their well-being. Governors and trustees provide effective support and challenge.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They are appreciative of the additional care and support provided for them and their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the early years, the quality of activities planned for continuous provision vary between different areas of learning, especially those relating to understanding the world. As a result, opportunities to consolidate children's foundational knowledge are less effective than they could be, and as leaders expect. Leaders need to strengthen this aspect of the early years curriculum so that inconsistencies are ironed out and planned activities for all areas of learning have a clear learning intent that will secure children's important foundational knowledge.
- Aspects of the mathematics curriculum relating to reasoning are not fully embedded and not taught with the same rigour as that of mathematical fluency. This means that some pupils struggle to make connections in their learning and to explain their mathematical thinking with confidence. Leaders need to strengthen this aspect of curriculum implementation so that more pupils are confident to tackle more-complex tasks and achieve more highly.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Cuthbert's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, to be good in December 2012.

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	148461
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10297531
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	224
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Sian Parnell
Website	http://www.stockton.schoolgrid.net/3312/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school offers a breakfast club and after-school provision.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is part of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust, a multi-academy trust of 30 primary schools and five secondary schools.

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 the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and other staff. The inspector met with representatives from the trust board, the local governing committee, the chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer and school improvement partner.
- The inspector held a telephone call with the acting director of the Diocese.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with the school, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 reading to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector met the designated safeguarding lead; checked the single central record of adults working in the school; took account of the views of 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktime and lunchtime. The inspector spoke with pupils and staff about behaviour.
- The inspector spoke with staff to discuss how the school supports their workload and well-being.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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