

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

Stratford Road, Hartlepool TS25 5AJ

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 February 2024

Outcome

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

The headteacher of this school is Joanne Wilson. 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?

'Let the light of Christ shine in us all' is the school's mission statement. Pupils know that they are loved and cared for in this highly inclusive school. They are cherished for the unique individuals they are and respond positively to the encouragement and support they receive.

Pupils behave well. Playtimes are lively with lots to do. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Any behaviours falling short of the school's high expectations are managed sensitively and with consideration of any additional needs.

Pupils know what bullying is and the different forms it can take. They are confident that bullying does not happen here. They are equally confident that if it were to happen it would be sorted straight away.

Pupils know that the school is aspirational for their futures. High expectations are set for pupils to work hard and achieve well. Despite this, pupils' outcomes in 2023 at the end of key stage 2 fell short of the school's expectations. Leaders took swift action to rectify this and made several curriculum adaptations.

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

Since joining the trust in 2021, the school has undertaken huge amounts of curriculum planning and review. It has adopted new schemes of work subject by subject. The

schemes are detailed and ambitious and map out what pupils will learn in well-defined steps. They are sufficiently editable to reflect the local context.

Early reading is prioritised. Starting in the early years, the phonics programme sets out precisely the order in which pupils' knowledge will build. Pupils quickly get to grips with the sounds letters can make. Pupils' progress is checked regularly. Anyone falling behind receives effective support to catch up. Pupils practise their reading with books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. This supports pupils' growing enthusiasm for reading. It is ensuring that they make good progress.

During phonics lessons, pupils learn to write the sounds that letters represent. This aspect of the phonics programme is less effective. This means that accurate letter formation and good handwriting habits are not reinforced consistently well.

The school thinks carefully about the books that pupils read and study in class. It offers a range of styles that support pupils' wider understanding of different cultures. It is further enriched by the school's involvement with the Royal Shakespeare Company for which it is, rightly, proud. This year will see pupils working on a live performance with actors from the company.

In other subjects, such as mathematics and history, pupils say how much they enjoy their learning. Consistent teaching approaches and the revisiting of previously taught concepts are helping pupils to know and remember more of what they have learned. However, activities that enable pupils to apply their knowledge to more demanding tasks are not yet fully embedded. For example, while pupils acquire a secure understanding of mathematical fluency, opportunities for pupils to apply this knowledge to reason and to problem solve remain limited. Consequently, pupils lack the secure strategies needed to tackle this aspect of the planned curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. The special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) knows the pupils exceptionally well. She ensures that staff are well trained and supported to make the necessary curriculum adaptations to meet pupils' needs. Early identification is key. Staff in Nursery and Reception are adept in doing so. This enables the support of other agencies to be engaged swiftly. Individual targets for the achievement of pupils with SEND are precise and time limited. They measure the incremental gains in pupils' progress well. Such is the effectiveness of this process that, for some pupils, the support is short term, and they catch up with their peers quickly.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is well considered. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's rich offer. Pupils are taught in an age-appropriate way to understand themselves and their bodies and to keep themselves safe. Floor books capture the extensiveness of the school's offer. A raft of after-school clubs, which include sporting clubs, choir and science club, supplements the offer further.

The school monitors pupils' attendance closely. A dedicated officer provides extensive advice, support and guidance to promote full attendance. Should a pupil's absence

become a cause for concern, the school works proactively with the wider family to improve this.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel respected and valued. A comprehensive programme of training, mentoring and coaching supports them to improve their practice. They know that leaders do all they can to support their well-being and be mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills for more demanding tasks are not fully embedded. This means that pupils do not deepen their understanding equally well across all curriculum subjects. The school needs to further embed this aspect of its curriculum so that more pupils can achieve highly.
- The encoding elements of the phonics programme are not taught consistently well. This means that opportunities to reinforce pupils' early writing skills are lost, and inaccuracies in pupils' letter formation and good handwriting habits are not ironed out quickly. The school needs to review this aspect of the phonics programme to ensure it is used well to support and improve pupils' early writing skills.

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 Cuthbert's RC Primary School to be good in April 2017.

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	148380
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10297518
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	249
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Joanne Wilson
Website	www.stcuthbertsschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School became an academy school in March 2021.
- The school is part of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust, a multi-academy trust of 30 primary schools and five secondary schools.
- The school uses alternative provision at Rossmere Pupil Referral Unit.

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, SENDCo 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 and deputy director of the Diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early 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 put 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.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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