

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Coundon

Victoria Lane, Coundon, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 8NN

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Anne-Marie Wilson. 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?

The school has experienced an unsettled time. There have been many changes to staffing. Leaders on all levels are determined for all pupils to succeed, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Since the poor outcomes achieved by pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2023, leaders have made important changes to improve the quality of education. These changes are beginning to make a difference. However, in some subjects, pupils do not achieve well enough.

Pupils are happy and well cared for in this school. Pupils know where to get help if they need it. This helps pupils to feel safe. The school is a calm environment where pupils focus on their learning. Pupils value each other's individuality. For example, in assemblies, pupils enjoy recognition for showing compassion to others. This helps to inspire pupils to be good citizens.

The school ensures that pupils benefit from a wide range of activities to develop their interests and build character. Activities include introducing pupils to sports they may not have tried before, such as bocce ball and fencing. Pupils enjoy participating in fundraising events such as the 'Turkey Trot', where they make headdresses and complete a run to raise money for a local foodbank.

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

In a short space of time, new leaders have made necessary changes to improve the school. Leaders acknowledge that not enough pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics. The school and trust are working together effectively to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve, including in early years.

The school's curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with SEND. The school is working to improve teaching of the well-sequenced curriculum. There are early signs of success in how well pupils are achieving in some subjects. For example, the history curriculum is taught effectively so that lessons build on what pupils already know. Teachers check pupils' understanding during lessons. They teach to close gaps in knowledge and address misconceptions. In mathematics and reading in English, assessment is not used precisely enough to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that these pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for the next stage in their education.

Some subject leaders are new to their role. They are knowledgeable about the subjects that they lead. However, they do not have a precise overview of the areas to improve. They are unclear of the impact of the actions they have already taken. Trust leaders are supporting leaders to monitor their subject more effectively and to provide support to staff.

Nursery children from the age of two enjoy songs and rhymes. From Reception year, children follow a well-structured phonics programme. They practise reading from

books matched to the sounds that they know. Checks successfully identify gaps in younger pupils' phonics knowledge. They receive extra support to help them learn to read. Older pupils enjoy class story time, where they listen to teachers reading books.

The school ensures that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified accurately. Staff who support pupils with SEND are well trained. Pupils get the support they need to access the full curriculum. In a few lessons, the curriculum is not adapted as well as it should be to enable all pupils with SEND to achieve success.

In early years, staff ensure that adult-led activities in literacy and early mathematics help children to get off to a strong start. However, across all areas of learning, some activities do not develop children's knowledge well enough. This includes children's development of spoken language. This means that children are not as well prepared as they could be for the full curriculum in Year 1.

The school's strategies to improve pupils' rates of attendance are having a positive impact. Leaders work diligently to support parents and carers to improve attendance and punctuality. Many parents value the relationships they have with staff.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their feelings and supported to manage strong emotions. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. The school helps pupils to make links between what they are learning and different careers. Pupils value their learning.

Many parents are happy about the school. However, a few parents say that the school does not communicate well with them. Some parents, including parents of pupils with SEND, feel they are not informed of changes in a timely manner.

Staff appreciate the support from leaders to manage their workload and well-being. They are united in their efforts to implement strategies to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not consistently check what pupils know and remember, including for pupils with SEND. This means that teaching does not address the gaps in pupils' knowledge of mathematics and reading as effectively as it could. The school should ensure that all staff use the school's assessment processes consistently well.

- The school has made recent improvements to leadership. In some areas, the school does not have clear systems to monitor and improve provision for pupils. This limits how well leaders understand what is working well and what needs to improve. The school needs to continue to develop their leadership processes to allow them to improve outcomes for all pupils effectively.
- Children in early years do not develop their learning well enough across all areas of the curriculum. This includes children’s communication and language development. The school needs to ensure that the early years curriculum focuses on the key knowledge and skills that children need to learn in each of the prime and specific areas so that they are well prepared for Year 1 and beyond.

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	148629
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10313573
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	123
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Anne-Marie Wilson
Website	www.stjosephscoundon.bhcet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of 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 school's religious character inspection is due to take place this academic year.
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Coundon converted to become an academy in June 2021. When Ofsted last inspected the predecessor school, St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary school Coundon, it was judged requires improvement overall.
- An interim headteacher took up her post in November 2023. Since academisation, there have been significant changes in staffing.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for education.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school clubs for pupils.
- The school's early years provision caters for two-year-old children.

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, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, and with other senior leaders. Meetings were also held with subject leaders, teachers and the consultant headteacher who is supporting the school.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust, including the chief executive officer (CEO), two deputy CEOs, the director of the trust board, the school's improvement officer and the early years leader for the trust. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the local governing committee.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the acting director of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics 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. The lead inspector also observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Suzanne Connolly	Ofsted Inspector

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