

Inspection of a good school: St Gerard's RC Primary School

Avalon Court, Hemlington, Middlesbrough TS8 9HU

Inspection dates:

30 April and 1 May 2024

Outcome

St Gerard's RC Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Joanne Coe. This school is part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Hugh Hegarty, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joseph Hughes.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff make the school a haven of calm for pupils. The school's Catholic values and clear behaviour policy help to teach pupils about the importance of behaving responsibly. Pupils understand the significance of the school's nine virtues, such as respectfulness and decency. These virtues reinforce high expectations and make pupils feel loved and cared for at St Gerard's.

Pupil conduct in lessons and at playtime is impressive. Pupil sports leaders plan and support lunchtime activities. This develops their self-confidence and communication skills.

Pupils reflect positively on the school's programme to support their mental health. Year 6 pupils particularly appreciate using the 'happy breathing' strategies to reduce their anxiety as transition to secondary education nears. Pupil 'happiness heroes' support the well-being of their peers.

The school has introduced several initiatives to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the school. For example, in Nursery there is a sensory space to support young children to develop their sense of sight, sound and touch.

Pupils are safe in the school and know how to keep others safe too. They know which adults have safeguarding responsibilities and who can provide help when needed.

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

The school curriculum builds pupils' knowledge and skills coherently from the early years to Year 6. The trust teaching and learning model is implemented consistently across the school. All lessons start with a recap of prior learning followed by the explanation and modelling of new ideas. Teachers check pupils' understanding before giving them opportunities to apply their learning. In some subjects, the important vocabulary that pupils need to learn has not been sufficiently prioritised. When this happens, pupils find it more difficult to link new learning to what they have been taught before.

The school recognises that some children in the early years need support with their communication and language skills. As a result, it prioritises the teaching of early reading, focusing on sharing books, songs and rhymes. For example, each class has a 'love to read' basket filled with a range of books. The school encourages parents to support pupils with their reading through their monthly stay and read sessions. The school has a daily story session. Pupils access an ambitious and diverse range of texts. Pupils are developing their 'book chatter' skills to articulate what they like and dislike about a text.

Staff teach phonics consistently well. They begin lessons by focusing on the sounds that pupils have not securely learned. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. They use their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words. The school checks the sounds that pupils know regularly. Pupils who are not on track receive additional phonics intervention daily. As a result, pupils read well.

Staff have developed a coherently planned and well-sequenced mathematics curriculum. Learning is broken into small steps to help pupils to build knowledge evenly over time. Adults help pupils to explain the reasons behind their solution to mathematical questions. They give them prompts and sentence starters to help them to show how they calculated an answer. Pupils' multiplication skills are built through daily practice. This is addressing the low outcomes in multiplication tables check outcomes in 2023.

The school continues to refine the provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders provide staff with training to help pupils who have experienced trauma. The school proactively works with external agencies and the local authority to support pupils with SEND. The school has made vast improvements in adapting tasks for pupils with SEND, particularly in core subjects. However, the school recognises the need for further improvement in how the wider curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

There is a whole-school approach to teaching about relationships and sex education that aligns with the school's Catholic ethos. Pupils speak with maturity about puberty and healthy relationships. Pupils understand e-safety and how to protect themselves from unwanted online contact.

The local governing body holds leaders to account through a clear trust framework. The link governors visit the school termly to challenge and support leaders at all levels. There is a coherence and consistency to their reporting.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, some pupils do not remember the most important knowledge that they need to learn. This means pupils do not make links between current and prior learning. The school should ensure that it focuses more closely on teaching pupils the most important knowledge that they need to remember.
- Sometimes, the curriculum is not adapted sufficiently well to help some pupils with SEND to complete tasks successfully, particularly in the wider curriculum. Where this is the case, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should. The school should continue to refine, improve and adapt the curriculum to further support pupils with SEND.

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 school to be good in November 2018.

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 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	142373
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	10297426
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	186
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joseph Hughes
Headteacher	Joanne Coe
Website	https://stgerards.npcat.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust in November 2015. There is a joint local governing body across two trust schools. They help to set the strategic direction of the school.
- The school is a Roman Catholic primary school. The most recent inspection of the school's religious character took place in June 2022.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school has nursery provision for three-year-old children.

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 this evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, curriculum leaders, staff and pupils.
- Meetings were also held with representatives of the local governing body, the diocese, the CEO and the chair of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. 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 inspector also discussed the curriculum structure in history.
- 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 views of parents, staff and pupils were considered from meeting with them and from the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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