

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

Mill Road, Seaham, County Durham SR7 0HW

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Inspection dates:

22 and 23 May 2024

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Nicola Noble. This school is part of Bishop Chadwick 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 (CEO), Brendan Tapping, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Daniel O' Mahoney.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Cuthbert's embody the school's vision and 'strive for excellence'. Older pupils act as excellent role models for others. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are considerate of others. They enter school with wide smiles each morning. They enjoy coming to school. A team of highly trained staff ensure pupils are safe. Pupils feel very safe at school. Parents agree. Pupils have numerous trusted adults to speak to. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. A pupil, echoing the views of many others, said, 'teachers always make sure we're okay'.

There are high expectations for all. Staff and pupils reflect these high expectations in the very positive learning environment that is evident across school. Pupils enjoy exciting and engaging lessons. They demonstrate commendable levels of concentration and focus in these lessons.

Pupils are proud to be part of the St Cuthbert's family. Behaviour and attitudes across the school are very positive. Attendance is high. Staff support pupils to develop a keen sense of equality. A pupil captured the ethos of others by saying, 'No matter your sexuality, skin tone or disability, we're all human and shouldn't be treated any differently.'

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

Early years staff immerse children in stories and songs. They encourage pupils to explore, question and develop their imagination. The staff encourage children to become resilient and independent learners. The learning environment in early years is vibrant and positive. Adults ask probing questions to enhance children's learning. Children are well prepared for their next stage of education.

The school ensures that reading is a high priority. Well-trained staff teach the phonics curriculum with fidelity. Pupils quickly gain the phonics knowledge they need. Accurate assessment means that any gaps in phonics knowledge are closed quickly. As a result, they become confident and fluent readers. The immersion in quality texts continues from early years to Year 6. Pupils enjoy many opportunities to hear adults read. They also benefit from chances to read for pleasure themselves.

Leaders have crafted a high-quality, bespoke curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. This curriculum gives every pupil the opportunity to achieve and experience success. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Talented staff teach this curriculum with consistency and fidelity. This means that pupils achieve highly. Staff make careful adaptations to the curriculum so that all pupils access high-quality teaching and learning. The curriculum has been designed to build knowledge and skills over time. This has noticeable impact on both pupils' achievement and the quality of work they produce. Across a wide range of subjects, pupils' work is of exceptional quality. In design and technology, for example, pupils designed and created wearable electronic technology for younger pupils. This involved programming and coding skills as well as subject-specific skills from the design and technology curriculum. Pupils take pride in their work. They talk with confidence about their learning. Pupils have excellent recall of prior learning. They enjoy being challenged.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Lessons proceed without interruption. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. The small minority of pupils who are persistently absent miss significant amounts of learning and then struggle to catch up when they are at school. The school is taking effective action to reduce the number of persistently absent pupils further.

The school has a carefully considered approach to pupils' broader development. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to take responsibility across the school. The Year 6 pupils, who act as buddies for children in Reception, take pride in being role models for these younger children, for example. The mini-Vinnies help to coordinate fundraising within the wider community. Pupils develop appreciation and understanding of those from other faiths. They understand the importance of fundamental British values and the protected characteristics. Consistent teaching of a high-quality curriculum ensures that pupils do not tolerate discrimination in any form. They have exemplary attitudes towards equality. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders at all levels share the same high ambition. This ambition is not to the detriment of staff workload or well-being. Staff feel very well supported in school. Governors and directors of the trust have a comprehensive understanding of the school. They hold

leaders to account. Parents feel part of the school community. One parent summed up the thoughts of others by saying, 'St Cuthbert's is a school that makes our children feel special and that they can achieve. The staff work hard to build strong relationships with their children and families to be able to work together.'

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## 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 Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, New Seaham to be good in May 2016.

## 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>	148626
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323135
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	202
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Daniel O' Mahoney
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Brendan Tapping
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Noble
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stcuthbertsprimary.com/">www.stcuthbertsprimary.com/</a>
<b>Date(s) of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in July 2021. When its predecessor school, St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, New Seaham was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is one of 30 schools in the Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- A breakfast club operates under the management of the school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- As the school is designated as having a religious character, it is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The last Catholic School Inspection of the school was in July 2023. The next inspection is due by 2028.

## 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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other school leaders, school staff, representatives of the governing body, representatives from the trust and a representative from the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 met with some other curriculum leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work from a wide range of other subjects.
- The inspector listened to some pupils from Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 reading to a familiar adult.
- 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 the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online staff survey, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online pupil survey, including the free-text comments.

## Inspection team

Richard Beadnall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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