

Inspection of a good school: St Charles' Catholic Primary School, Tudhoe

Durham Road, Spennymoor, County Durham DL16 6SL

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 May 2024

Outcome

St Charles' Catholic Primary School, Tudhoe continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Thompson. 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 directors, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Charles' Catholic Primary School has a strong sense of community. Pupils are proud to attend this school. The Catholic ethos of the school is important to staff and pupils. Monday morning assemblies share a weekly scripture reading, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect on current events in the news. This contributes to how thoughtful pupils are.

The school is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). By the time they leave key stage 2, pupils achieve well. The school has recently strengthened its curriculum offer. This is already having a positive impact. The school benefits from the development and shared resources provided by the trust.

Pupils are polite and caring towards each other. They enjoy awarding their peers certificates for displaying the school's virtues. There are clear expectations of pupils' behaviour around school. They behave well.

The school teaches all pupils how to recognise risks to their safety. Pupils are happy and safe. The school fosters a sense of belonging for all pupils. The 'big friend, little friend' programme pairs Year 6 and Reception children together for their first year of school life. They play, read and perform together. This provides a lovely welcome to the school for the younger pupils and a mentorship opportunity for the older ones.

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

The school has introduced a broad and ambitious curriculum. There is high ambition for all pupils. The recent changes to the curriculum, developed by the trust, are already having a positive impact on pupils deepening their learning in some foundation subjects.

The school has rightly prioritised improving the curriculum for early reading. This has rapidly improved how quickly and fluently children learn to read. The school has worked closely with the trust and other external support. The reading curriculum is now well taught. This is having a positive impact on how well current pupils learn to read. Recent training has improved staff expertise. The school closely monitors pupils' progress in reading. Any pupils who need extra help with reading are quickly identified. These pupils benefit from additional support to help them catch up. Pupils enjoy taking part in the school's reading challenges and discussing the books that they are reading.

The school has demonstrated a focus on curriculum development to help pupils to remember their learning in the long term. This is having a positive impact. Pupils regularly revisit their prior learning. They enjoy sharing their knowledge with each other. The school's systems to check what pupils know and remember are more developed in some subjects than in others. This contributes to, in some curriculum subjects, teachers not recognising gaps in the knowledge that pupils need for future learning. This means that some pupils struggle to make links to previous learning. Lessons are ambitious. The school has prioritised the important vocabulary and knowledge pupils need to know. In some subjects, there are missed opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge in lessons. The school recognises this as an area of development and is working closely with the trust to address this.

The school engages with external specialists to identify pupils' needs and provide them with the support that they need. Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers. They are well supported by highly trained staff. They receive the timely and effective support that they need to be successful in lessons.

Children in the early years quickly settle into the clear routines and expectations of school. They benefit from the well-considered learning opportunities across all areas of learning. Children's personal, social and emotional development is prioritised by the school. Children learn to celebrate and appreciate their uniqueness. They are confident and thoughtful. They play well together and enjoy choosing books to share with their class. Children learn how to stay safe online and keep their bodies healthy.

There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are polite and friendly to each other and visitors. Behaviour in lessons creates a positive learning environment. Pupils are attentive and have positive attitudes to learning. The school's systems to promote good attendance and punctuality work well. Where attendance is an issue for some, the school provides highly effective support for families as and when required. Pupils attend school well.

Pupils are proud to be a part of this school. They value the school virtues and Catholic ethos and reflect on these when discussing how to treat others. The spiritual development

of pupils is a priority. Pupils' wider development is well considered at St Charles'. The school ensures all pupils take part in an extra-curricular club and competitive event each year. Pupils value the leadership opportunities given to them. They also enjoy being able to award their friends, and teachers, recognition for displaying the school's virtues in weekly celebration assemblies.

Those responsible for governance know the school well. Governors are highly supportive. They have a clear understanding of the school's improvement journey. The school regularly engages with professional development from the trust and external partners. This has strengthened the school's curriculum offer and rapid improvement journey. Staff workload is well balanced. Staff appreciate how leaders prioritise their well-being.

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's systems to check what pupils know and remember are more developed in some subjects than in others. This contributes to, in some curriculum subjects, teachers not recognising gaps in the knowledge that pupils need for future learning. The school should refine how it checks pupils' knowledge so that staff can quickly identify gaps and plan future work accordingly.
- In some subjects, there are some inconsistencies in teachers' subject expertise and pedagogical choices. As a result, there are missed opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge in lessons. Leaders should continue to ensure that teachers receive timely and effective support to develop their practice and subject-specific knowledge.

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 Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided 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	148628
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10323136
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	240
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
CEO	Mike Shorten
Headteacher	Lisa Thompson
Website	www.stcharles.bhcet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School converted to become an academy in June 2021. When its predecessor school, St Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust.
- This is a Roman Catholic school. The school's last Catholic Schools Inspectorate Inspection took place in March 2018.
- The school provides a breakfast club and after-school childcare.
- The school does not currently use alternative education providers.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke to senior leaders, including representatives from the trust, board of directors and governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. 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 listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- 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 also spoke to leaders, teachers, governors and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspector analysed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They reviewed answers from the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Georgina Chinaka, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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