

Inspection of St Hild's Church of England School

King Oswy Drive, West View, Hartlepool TS24 9PB

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

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

The headteacher of this school is Tracey Gibson. This school is part of NEAT 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), Debi Bailey, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anne McNall.

What is it like to attend this school?

The staff at St Hild's want the best for the pupils, families and the community. The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Most pupils meet these expectations. This contributes to the purposeful atmosphere in the school.

Well-structured lessons, which focus on learning more about the subject, are the norm. Leaders continually review the curriculum. More recently changes have been made to school systems, processes and staffing, in order to improve on the weak external examination outcomes of summer 2023. Published outcomes in 2023 did not meet the schools' aspirations for pupils' achievement.

The school supports pupils to understand how to become strong scholars. Pupils' study habits are improving. Staff and pupils understand the school's routines for learning in lessons. Knowing what to expect in lessons, and individuals' roles in lessons, helps both staff and pupils create a positive climate for learning.

Pupils are safe in school. Staff listen to pupils. They support pupils well when they have worries and concerns. Adults' praise and recognition of pupils' positive work and attitudes are a focus in lessons. Leaders have implemented a range of strategies alongside a whole-trust attendance policy. Pupils' attendance is improving. Staff recognise excellence in lessons and nominate pupils to receive a 'Headteacher Excellence Award' each week.

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

The school has an outward-looking mindset. This allows leaders to draw on expertise to develop the school's curriculum and support the staff team in implementing this. This work is underpinned by a clear focus on developing behaviour systems that support learning. This contributes to a continually improving curriculum offer, which helps pupils to know and remember more.

When pupils start school in Year 7, the staff are keen to learn about them and support their individual needs. The school also welcomes many pupils at various times throughout the school year. The warm welcome given to these mid-year entrants helps them to settle in quickly.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. In key stage 3, food lessons help pupils learn life skills, such as cooking and how to prepare a meal on a budget. Teachers follow clear routines in classes. For example, pupils read, record and understand the learning objective of every lesson. The school's refinements to the curriculums are continuous. The impact of these positive changes is beginning to be seen.

The school's well-stocked library is more than a room with books. It is a place where pupils enjoy reading books that transport them to different places and times. Staff have carefully chosen the books to engage the pupils in reading for pleasure. Those pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read receive support from well-

trained and knowledgeable adults. The school quickly uses a variety of methods to improve pupils' reading. Phonics is taught daily to those pupils who need it. This enables them to rapidly improve their reading ability.

In some subject areas, the school has struggled to recruit staff. Where this is the case, senior leaders have invested in training to upskill the existing staff. This investment in staff training has helped to keep the curriculum broad in key stages 3 and 4. The school's EBacc entries are low. Leaders have plans to improve this.

The school provides pupils with strong career guidance to support them when choosing their subject options in Year 9. Many of the pupils who spoke to inspectors have a future career in mind. They know the qualifications that will help them to be employable in their chosen career.

The school believes that positive behaviours form the bedrock for learning. Low-level disruption is not allowed to spoil learning. The school imposes consequences on pupils that are in line with the school's behaviour policy. The use of suspensions is high, however, this is reducing. The school's records demonstrate that suspension is used appropriately.

Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn and socialise with their peers well. Staff use information about their individual needs. This enables them to support and help pupils with SEND appropriately. For a small proportion of pupils, targets lack the precise detail needed to support them to access the curriculum, in order to make more rapid progress.

The school provides opportunities to enhance pupils' wider development and to support pupils in becoming active and independent citizens. This is part of the school's wider vision to equip pupils with the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in life. The school is keen for all pupils to be independent learners and thinkers who can self-regulate. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, based on pupils' interests and talents. Leadership opportunities are also available. These include working as sports and worship leaders. Pupils show respect and tolerance for other faiths. They have a secure understanding of fundamental British values, such as the rule of law and democracy.

Trustees have a keen interest in the school. They are astute and supportive of the governing body and leaders' decisions in school. The staff in school have the support of school leaders.

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 has undertaken extensive curriculum improvements. The impact of these changes is at an early stage. The school must ensure that subject leaders are supported to embed these positive changes and that this work is monitored and evaluated, in order to support all pupils to achieve ambitious outcomes that match leaders' high expectations.
- The school has struggled to recruit specialist teachers in some subjects. Some staff do not have the subject specific knowledge that is needed to implement the school's curriculum well. Pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of in these areas. The school should continue to support teachers to gain the specialist knowledge that is needed to teach the school's curriculum consistently well in all subjects.

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

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| Unique reference number | 148532 |
| Local authority | Hartlepool Borough |
| Inspection number | 10297538 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 674 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Anne McNall |
| Headteacher | Tracey Gibson |
| Website | sthilds.neat.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- St Hild's Church of England School is part of the Newcastle East Mixed Academy Trust (NEAT).
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school uses five providers of alternative provision, of which four are unregistered.
- The proportion of pupils eligible to receive the government's pupil premium funding is well-above average.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- As the school is designated as having a religious character, it is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The last section 48 inspection of the school was in February 2023. The timescales for reinspection have been extended because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors did deep dives in English, mathematics, science, design technology, and history. They discussed the curriculum design with leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers about the curriculum.
- The lead inspector met with members of the trust board, including the chair of the trust board, the local governing body and the CEO.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher. They also met with other senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, personal development, careers, attendance and behaviour.
- Members of the inspection team looked at a range of documentation regarding the support pupils with SEND receive. Inspectors looked at the quality of the provision for pupils with SEND in lessons.
- 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 responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents were also considered.
- Inspectors also considered the views of pupils from meetings with groups of pupils from across the school. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally about the school.

Inspection team

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|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Richard Jones, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Kate Morris | Ofsted Inspector |
| Toni Spoons | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jacqui Johnson | Ofsted Inspector |

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