

Inspection of a good school: St Hild's College Church of England Aided Primary School, Durham

Renny's Lane, Gilesgate, Durham DH1 2HZ

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 July 2024

Outcome

St Hild's College Church of England Aided Primary School, Durham continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils of all ages at St Hild's exemplify the school's motto of 'Shine Bright'. They embody the school values, which include community, forgiveness and love. Pupils are polite, considerate and understanding. They have commendable attitudes towards their learning. Pupils are safe. They talk with understanding about how staff keep them safe. Pupils love their school. They develop very positive, nurturing relationships with adults. One girl summed up the responses of others by saying that adults 'are always looking out for you, keeping you safe and making learning fun'.

Leaders establish high expectations for all. Pupils generally achieve well as a result of these shared high expectations. The calm and orderly atmosphere throughout school is striking. Lessons proceed without disruption.

Pupils are proud to be part of this caring school. They have many opportunities to take on responsibilities. The outdoor ambassadors are proud of how they support younger pupils within the forest school provision, for example. Relationships with parents and carers are positive. There is a tangible sense of community within the school. One parent's comment that 'all staff go above and beyond to help the children' reflects the views of many others.

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

Children who join the school in early years enjoy a varied and engaging learning experience. There is a very clear focus on communication and language. Adults expertly model language and vocabulary for pupils. They plan exciting activities. Children in Nursery plant their own lettuce seeds. They talk about seeds needing water and sunshine to grow. They then make their own sandwiches with the lettuce and other ingredients. Adults immerse children in rhymes and stories. Children then retell these stories using appropriate storytelling conventions. Pupils work collaboratively to build a large bridge to

help recreate the story of The Three Billy Goats Gruff, for example. They then use expressive language to retell the story accurately.

The school's proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well above average. Well-trained staff work closely with senior leaders to identify pupils' needs precisely. They put effective support in place to meet these needs. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Since the previous inspection, the school has implemented a new phonics programme. Adults with secure subject knowledge teach this programme with consistency. There is a clear focus on ensuring that pupils with a wide range of starting points make progress. Pupils develop into fluent and confident readers by the end of key stage 1. However, progress and attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 has been weaker over time. Pupils' understanding of age-appropriate vocabulary has not been sufficiently well developed. Leaders have begun to make improvements to the reading curriculum in key stages 1 and 2. The impact of these improvements is not evident at this point in time.

In other curriculum areas, pupils talk with confidence about their learning. They enjoy solving mathematical problems and apply their knowledge to solve these problems well. They make links between different curriculum areas. For example, using their curriculum knowledge of World War 1, pupils write letters from the perspective of a soldier's mother to her son. They then respond from the perspective of the soldier. Pupils also understand causality, with pupils talking about the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand as a factor in the events leading up to World War 1. Younger pupils talk about Grace Darling and the rescue of sailors from the wreck of the Forfarshire. In some curriculum areas, however, the key knowledge that pupils should learn and remember is not clearly set out.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' regular attendance and punctuality. They have taken effective action to reduce persistent absence in the school.

The school has put in place a high-quality curriculum for pupil's wider development. Pupils gain an effective understanding of other faiths, religions and beliefs. A visit to a local mosque helps bring classroom learning to life. Pupils develop an exceptional understanding of tolerance, respect and diversity. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe both online and in the wider community. They enjoy the opportunities they have for leadership. School and class councillors talk with pride about how they make sure pupils' voices are heard across the school.

Governors share leaders' high expectations. They offer support and challenge to school leaders. They ask probing questions to ensure that the school is moving forward with its key priorities. Leaders have a clear focus on staff workload and well-being. Staff feel very well supported in their roles.

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, the key knowledge that pupils need to know and remember is not clearly identified. This means that teaching is not precisely targeted to ensure that pupils develop this key knowledge over time. The school should ensure that key knowledge is clearly identified within these subjects.
- Over time, the reading curriculum in key stage 2 has not had sufficient focus on expanding pupils' vocabulary. This means that pupils' lack of understanding when reading limits their achievement. The school should ensure that teachers' delivery of the reading curriculum ensures pupils' knowledge and use of vocabulary increases.

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 on 30 April and 1 May 2019.

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	114270
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346300
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jen Moss
Headteacher	Alex Ryder
Website	www.st-hilds.durham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	30 April and 1 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new assistant headteacher is in post since the previous inspection.
- The school offers provision for two-year-olds as part of its early years setting.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school operates a breakfast club under the management of the governing body.
- As the school is designated as having a religious character, it is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The last statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools was in December 2022. The next inspection is due before December 2027.

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, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. 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 discussed the curriculum and looked at examples of pupils' work in some 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 questionnaire, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Richard Beadnall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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