

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, South Moor

Hustledown, South Moor, Stanley, County Durham DH9 6PH

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

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

The executive headteacher of this school is Jennifer Gill. This school is part of Bishop Wilkinson 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, Nicholas Simon Hurn OBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Gannon.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's is a welcoming and friendly school where everyone is known well. Pupils are happy and feel part of this small school's community. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm in this Catholic school. This helps pupils to live out the school's vision and 'grow together in the friendship of faith'. Pupils have a secure understanding of mutual respect and show this through positive interactions with each other.

The school prioritises the well-being of pupils. They are given regular opportunities to share their views and talk about their feelings. Pupils are confident that their teachers will help them deal with any problems they may have.

Leaders have taken rapid action to increase the school's expectations of what pupils can achieve. They have implemented changes well to improve the quality of education pupils receive. These changes are having a positive impact on pupils' current progress and achievement.

Behaviour in and out of lessons is calm. Pupils understand and demonstrate the school rules of 'be ready, respectful and safe'. They say that teachers make learning fun. Pupils engage well in class. There are very few instances of low-level disruption. Pupils play well together and enjoy time with their friends from other classes.

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

Leaders have taken rapid, effective action to improve the quality of education at St Mary's. A new, ambitious curriculum is in place for all pupils. The school has identified the key knowledge and skills it wants pupils to gain. Some subjects of the curriculum are more embedded than others. To address existing gaps in pupils' knowledge, leaders have prioritised the order in which some content is taught.

Staff have benefited from ongoing training to support them to deliver the curriculum effectively. This is having a positive impact on pupils. Pupils are making better progress. This is particularly the case for mathematics, where pupils enjoy new learning and 'getting things right'. The published outcomes for St Mary's do not reflect the current, higher standards pupils are reaching in the school.

The school identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Staff use assessments precisely to identify these pupils' barriers to learning. The school provides additional intervention support for these pupils. However, in some lessons, chosen learning activities do not consistently allow pupils with SEND to access the curriculum as well as their peers.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils enjoy books from a growing range of authors. As a result of high-quality staff training, pupils benefit from consistent and effective phonics teaching. Regular assessment of pupils' reading means that staff can act quickly to support those who need it. Pupils gain the skills they need to be able to

read well. Unfortunately, some pupils do not practise their reading regularly at home.

There are systems and policies in place to monitor pupils' attendance. Although attendance is improving, some groups of pupils do not attend school often enough. This means that some pupils do not access and benefit from the improved school curriculum offer. They do not make the progress that their classmates make.

Leaders have carefully considered the curriculum for personal, social and health education. They have identified what pupils will learn about important topics, such as how to stay safe and the make-up of different types of families. The impact of this work is clear. Pupils speak with confidence about how to keep themselves safe when working and playing online. They show respect towards different families and communities. Pupils also learn about life in modern Britain and fundamental British values. For example, children in early years vote for the book they want to listen to daily. Older pupils value the importance of being voted to the school council. One school councillor recognised that this role means they can 'make it happen'. The school has extended and developed its curriculum for religious education to include a deeper understanding of world religions. This work continues to develop.

Children who attend the early years are happy. They get off to a flying start. They enjoy playing together in their busy classroom and expansive outdoor area. Leaders have carefully considered the key resources and provision that are important for children to access at each stage of their development. Early years curriculum planning identifies 'violet vocabulary', which adults use well in the classroom to build and promote children's language development.

Leaders, at all levels, have increased the expectations of everyone involved at St Mary's. Most families recognise and embrace these positive changes. Staff are highly supportive of leaders' work and appreciate the consideration given to their workload. The local governing committee and trust know the school's strengths and areas that require further development well. Their challenge and support continue to improve the school's work.

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 ambitious curriculum plans are not fully embedded. In some subjects, some older pupils have gaps in their subject knowledge. The school should continue to embed its curriculum plans and ensure these rapidly address gaps in pupils' knowledge.

- Some learning activities are not adapted well enough for pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils do not fully meet the ambitions of the school's curriculum. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and understanding they need to adapt and scaffold learning activities effectively to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. These pupils miss vital learning and fall behind their classmates. The school should continue to implement strategies to improve pupils' attendance, including ongoing work to engage with pupils' families.

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	148845
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10323155
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Gannon
CEO of the trust	Nicholas Simon Hurn
Headteacher	Jennifer Gill (Executive headteacher)
Website	stmaryssouthmoor.bwcet.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, South Moor converted to become an academy in November 2021. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- This school is part of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. Its last section 48 inspection was in September 2016.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school operates an on-site breakfast club.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to senior leaders, including the chair of the local governing committee, a representative of trustees and representatives from the trust. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; looked at behaviour and attendance logs and safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- The lead inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator, spoke to pupils with SEND and reviewed the plans in place to support these pupils. They visited lessons to see how well pupils with SEND are supported.
- Inspectors visited the early years provision to discuss learning with children and leaders.
- Inspectors observed behaviour at the start of the day, at playtimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors took account of the views from Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including free-text comments. The lead inspector also talked to parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to the Ofsted surveys to gather the views of staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Scott Grason-Taylor, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Belita Scott Ofsted Inspector

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