

Inspection of a good school: Blessed John Duckett Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary

Smith Street, Tow Law, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL13 4AU

Inspection date:

10 November 2021

Outcome

Blessed John Duckett Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and want to learn. Staff know pupils extremely well and have high expectations of them. Pupils respond well to the work they are set. Staff join in with pupils' delight when they are successful.

There is a close relationship between staff, pupils and families that gives the school a family feel. Pupils of all ages play happily together in the playground. Staff help to resolve any minor disagreements. The vast majority of parents and pupils agree that the school is a safe place.

Behaviour is good at all times of the day. Pupils follow school rules and agree that staff are fair. Pupils know that there is always someone to talk to if they have concerns or worries. Bullying and discrimination are extremely rare and dealt with promptly. Staff have a deep understanding of the causes of unacceptable behaviour. They put in place measures to try to resolve them.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum which helps them gain more knowledge. Forest school helps to develop life skills, such as using tools safely. All pupils take part in sports events which encourage them to be active and healthy. Some aspects of the curriculum are at an early stage of implementation. Pupils' knowledge is not as strong when this is the case.

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

Staff, led by the headteacher, have a clear vision for the school. Detailed curriculum plans ensure that pupils learn more as they move through school. Teachers adapt plans well to make sure pupils gain the right knowledge in the right order.

Leaders provide staff with the training they need to teach their subjects. Adults regularly check pupils' understanding during lessons. If pupils struggle, staff offer more detailed explanations or additional resources. This keeps pupils on track. Prompt action by staff means pupils are attentive. Disruption in lessons is extremely rare.

Some curriculum plans, such as in art, are newly implemented. Staff are not as confident to teach precise drawing skills and techniques. Pupils' drawing skills in their sketchbooks are therefore more variable.

Children learn to read as soon as they start school. Nursery-age children develop their listening skills in many different ways. They are then ready to begin a well-structured phonics programme when they start Reception Year. Staff have the expertise to ensure that pupils develop their phonic knowledge as they progress through the programme. Pupils read books which are well matched to this knowledge. Those who struggle get extra support so they learn to read with confidence and fluency.

Teachers enrich the topics which pupils study with well-chosen class reading books. For example, older pupils are enjoying a novel which helps to deepen their knowledge of Mayan civilisation. The youngest children have learned about Greta Thunberg and Sir David Attenborough in their class book.

Staff know pupils very well. They quickly identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Action is taken to get the right resources and help. This means pupils learn confidently alongside their classmates.

The wider curriculum successfully engages pupils and supports their personal development. Regular forest school and gardening sessions help pupils appreciate environmental issues. They gain confidence participating in sports and games. Pupils learn to play a musical instrument. Visits usually enrich learning but have not resumed because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Leaders have recently introduced curriculum plans that include many opportunities for pupils to learn about the diversity of lifestyles in modern Britain. However, pupils do not have this knowledge yet.

Teamwork characterises the work of staff in school. Staff have full confidence in the headteacher. In a small school, workload is heavy. Staff say that clear, straightforward systems and procedures help to keep workload manageable.

Nearly all governors are new to the role. They are extremely supportive. Governors are mindful of the headteacher's substantial workload. They have plans in place to explore additional support for the headteacher. The restrictions caused by COVID-19 have made it more difficult for governors to gain a detailed oversight of the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A thorough knowledge of pupils and regular training mean that staff are vigilant to any concern. They are clear about what to do if they have concerns over a child's safety.

The headteacher ensures that concerns over a child's safety are followed up and recorded appropriately. Leaders secure prompt help from other agencies when this is necessary.

Leaders make sure that opportunities to learn about staying safe are planned in the curriculum. Pupils know how to respond to cyber-bullying, for example. Their knowledge about issues such as seeking consent from others is less well developed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' skills and knowledge in some subjects are not as well developed as in others. In art, drawing skills and techniques have not been taught consistently. As a result, pupils' art skills are variable. Leaders have already planned staff training to implement the art curriculum confidently.
- Pupils have limited knowledge of issues linked to consent and of the diversity of lifestyles in modern Britain. They are not as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they need to be. Curriculum plans need to be implemented more effectively so pupils gain this necessary knowledge.
- Governors are aware that the impact of COVID-19 has made it more difficult to develop detailed oversight of the school's work. This has limited some aspects of the support and challenge they can provide. Governors should continue with their plans to enhance training and to gain first-hand knowledge of the work of the school.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114283 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10200266 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 52 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Elizabeth McGurk |
| Headteacher | Jenna Ellison |
| Website | www.blessedjohnduckett.durham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 26 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staffing changes. A new headteacher took up post in September 2020. No other member of staff holds a leadership post. Two class teachers have been appointed. All governors, with the exception of the chair of the governing body, were appointed within the last 18 months.
- The school has a breakfast club operating on the site, which is managed by the school.
- Blessed John Duckett has a Roman Catholic denomination. The last section 48 inspection took place in November 2016. The next inspection should take place within the prescribed period. Section 48 inspections (or the equivalent inspection of an academy) are usually carried out every three to five years (and usually within two to three years of a new voluntary-aided school or academy or free school opening). Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and were due to restart in September 2021. The first inspection will be within eight years of the last, rather than the usual three to five years.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors met with staff, pupils and governors and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed curriculum plans and spoke to staff about some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record. They talked to pupils and staff about their views of safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits and lunchtimes. They spoke to pupils and to all staff about their views on behaviour.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and school development plans and policies.
- Inspectors considered the 13 free-text responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. An inspector met with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and considered the five responses to Ofsted's survey for staff. The inspectors considered 16 responses to Ofsted's survey of pupils.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Oliver Flitcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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