

Inspection of a good school: Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Prior Street, Darlington, County Durham DL3 9EN

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2023

Outcome

Holy Family Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Jane Weatherall. 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, Michael Shorten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at Holy Family are successful in their aim to ensure that every person is valued, nurtured and respected as an individual. There are highly positive relationships between pupils, parents/carers and staff. New families are welcomed and settle into the school community quickly. Pupils are safe and happy in school.

Pupils respond positively to the high expectations set across school life. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and attentive learners. They are confident in articulating their views in regular debates on current topics of interest to them. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In early years, children learn how to behave. They readily follow routines, share equipment and take turns. Pupils are very polite and respectful. Pupils listen well to one another and encourage each other to succeed. Year 6 pupils take their role as buddy to Reception children very seriously. They show kindness and care towards younger pupils and act as superb role models.

Pupils play an active role in the local community, developing intergenerational relationships. They train as Dementia Friends and serve at the Dementia Café. As a result of the wider curriculum, pupils flourish and grow in character. Pupils thrive at this very ambitious school.

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

This is a school where reading is valued and promoted. Staff immerse children in stories and rich language from the moment they start in early years. In Nursery, children learn to listen and talk about books. Children handle books with care and choose which texts to read at story time. Highly trained staff teach phonics. Staff carefully show pupils how to

pronounce the sounds that letters represent. Precise and timely checks identify any pupil who is finding reading hard. These pupils get the support they need to build their confidence and their fluency. The phonics programme is designed to assist pupils in reading and writing. However, some pupils do not remember and apply the phonics that they have been taught when spelling common sounds and words.

As pupils move through the school, they read a wide range of carefully selected books and stories in class. Teachers use a range of strategies to successfully motivate pupils to read at home. These include circulating the latest book published for the age group. Some pupils are less keen on challenging themselves in reading more broadly. They are reluctant to move away from familiar authors and genres. The school is continuing to promote a wide variety of texts to counter this.

School and trust staff have revised the curriculum in recent years. It begins in the early years and clearly identifies the important foundations children need to be ready for key stage 1. Teachers value the detailed guidance and practical resources to help them deliver the curriculum. This helps to reduce teacher workload. Pupils are very successful in subjects such as reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of key stage 2. However, in some year groups, some pupils have difficulty in recalling their prior learning. In mathematics, for example, some pupils do not have sufficient multiplication knowledge to answer calculations efficiently. Pupils enjoy their geography lessons, but some cannot recall their learning accurately on topics such as the River Tees. Staff make checks on pupils' long-term learning and provide recall sessions at the beginning of lessons.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are nurtured and supported well. Staff adapt lessons to ensure that pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. Pupils with SEND experience success in their learning.

Provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. Pupils flourish as individuals. They develop spiritually through liturgical dance, quiet reflection and prayerful activity. Pupils respect those who have religious and secular beliefs different to their own. Visits to places such as Lindisfarne promote a sense of regional identity. A wide variety of enrichment activities are available, and pupils enthuse about them. Pupils develop their talents and interests in a range of areas. Some pupils represent the region in sporting events. Others excel in playing musical instruments. Pupils take pride in organising charitable activities and being part of the 'Mini Vinnies' group.

The trust and school have a mutually beneficial relationship. School staff contribute to trust-wide policies and practice. The trust has created a welcoming learning environment. The trust is responsible for the many improvements made to the school building. Middle leaders receive training and opportunities to prepare them for senior leadership. Clear processes for oversight and accountability lead to continuous improvement in this school.

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, such as phonics, mathematics and geography, pupils do not retain what they have learned securely enough in their long-term memory. This means that they struggle to recall knowledge that they have been taught. Leaders should develop further strategies to ensure that pupils embed knowledge successfully in their long-term memory in these subjects.

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 in June 2018.

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	139533
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10290229
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	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Jane Weatherell
Website	www.holyfamily.bhcet.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust.
- The school is a member of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and has a Christian character. As such, the school is also inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The diocese last carried out a section 48 inspection in May 2017. The school was graded good.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Meetings were also held with the early years leader, subject leaders, class teachers and pupils. Further meetings were held with early career teachers and some support staff.

- The inspector met also with a representative from the local governing board and the diocese, as well as trustees.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector looked at curriculum planning, conducted joint lesson visits with leaders, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at pupils' books and samples of their work.
- Prior to the inspection, the inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, around the school and at playtime and lunchtime. She spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- 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 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were taken into account through a number of meetings, as well as their responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Mary Cook, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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