

Inspection of Our Lady and St Thomas Catholic Primary School, Willington

Cumberland Terrace, Willington, Crook, County Durham DL15 0PB

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Ruth Veitch. 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 (CEO), Michael Shorten and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this friendly and inclusive school. They enjoy their lessons. They are polite, kind and courteous to each other and adults. They make visitors feel welcome and are keen to share their experiences and work.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils' behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around school. They demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to their learning. Older pupils successfully model these exemplary behaviours to younger children, such as taking turns and listening to others. This results in younger children showing high levels of self-control too.

Adults take pupils' worries and/or concerns seriously. Leaders actively seek pupils' views around a range of issues. For example, pupils contribute wholeheartedly to making the school an even safer environment for learning. Pupils are delighted when their suggestions are adopted by the school.

Pupils carry out leadership roles such as school councillors, and mathematics and art ambassadors confidently. These roles help to develop pupils' character. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and make a difference, both in school and in the wider community.

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

The school's curriculum is well planned. It is broken down into manageable chunks so that it is clear what pupils need to learn and when. Curriculum planning starts from Nursery to Year 6. In the early years, staff deliberately plan how they link areas of learning to children's interests and key themes, such as a bonfire night. Throughout school, teachers design learning so that pupils revisit important knowledge as a matter of routine. Teachers clearly explain new information that builds on pupils' existing knowledge. As a result, pupils remember what they have learned, such as the characteristics of key time periods within the Stone Age in history lessons.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use resources consistently well to help pupils understand tricky concepts. Staff model the correct subject-specific vocabulary, insisting that pupils do the same.

Pupils love to read. Reading is a priority for the school. Adults read carefully chosen books to pupils daily. Children listen attentively to stories and join in with songs. Staff encourage and support parents to read to and with their children. Reading ambassadors promote reading through events and are successful in obtaining books for the school library. They are rightfully proud of their work.

Children begin to learn phonics in Reception. Leaders swiftly identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind with phonics. The books that pupils read generally match the sounds that they know. However, there are some instances where reading books are too difficult for pupils who are at the early stages of reading. In addition, there are

some inconsistencies in the way adults deliver phonics lessons. This means that a small minority of younger pupils are too slow in gaining the skills they need to read confidently. Older pupils who receive targeted interventions to help them catch up, do so quickly and successfully. Most older pupils are skilled readers.

The school uses a range of strategies to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to concentrate. Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers. However, the plans that staff use to support pupils with SEND are not clear and precise enough. This means that learning activities for a few pupils with SEND are not well matched to their needs.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. Excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils throughout school. Children in early years are well supported by knowledgeable adults. Children settle quickly and know the early years routines well. Older pupils like the rewards that they receive for their work and their positive attitudes to learning.

Leaders provide a programme for pupils to learn valuable life skills. Pupils understand what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like. They know how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the wider community. Pupils show a thorough understanding of fundamental British values and why they are important.

The trust has an accurate view of the school. It knows the strengths of the school and its development priorities well. The trust provides effective challenge and support to help improve the school. The trust's leaders carefully monitor the school's work, such as the implementation of the curriculum, pupils' attendance and types of behaviour incidents.

Staff, including those new to the school and the profession, receive high levels of support both personally and in managing their workload. Leaders care for staff and their well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, some staff do not deliver phonics lessons consistently well. Some of the books that are given to pupils who are at the early stages of reading do not match their phonics knowledge. As a result, some pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read do not do as well as they should. The trust and school leaders should ensure that staff receive the appropriate training and expertise to support all pupils to learn to read well.

- The school's plans to support pupils with SEND are often not precise enough. This means that teachers do not consistently provide effective adaptations for pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not access the curriculum content. The school should ensure that teachers receive training and support to provide highly effective adaptations for pupils with SEND.

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	148627
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10255635
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	121
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
CEO of the trust	Michael Shorten
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Ruth Veitch
Website	www.olst.bhcet.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust.
- The headteacher has been in post for four years. The deputy headteacher is new to post since September 2023.
- There is a nursery provision on site, which is managed by the school.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, trust directors, including the chair of the trust, the CEO, the school improvement partner, a representative from the Hexham and Newcastle Diocese and the local priest.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, and history. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at work in pupils' books. Inspectors also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes, lunchtimes and in the wraparound care. Inspectors talked to pupils about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors talked to parents and considered the online responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included comments from parents and carers in the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the written responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jenny Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Katie Lowe

Ofsted Inspector

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