

Inspection of a good school: St Bede's Catholic Academy

Green Lane, Stockton-on-Tees, Teesside TS19 0DW

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 November 2021

Outcome

St Bede's Catholic Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils talk about St Bede's with a sense of pride. They value the education and life chances that the school offers. They know their teachers believe in them. School leaders are ambitious for their pupils, with the view 'heart in Stockton, eyes on the world'. Parents describe this as a caring and nurturing school. They felt well supported when the school was closed due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Pupils continued to learn remotely, with regular support from their teachers. School leaders went the extra mile to support those families who were experiencing difficulties.

There are high expectations of behaviour. In the lessons visited during the inspection, pupils were engaged and eager to get involved. They listen to one another respectfully and follow instruction. Pupils enjoy a number of roles and responsibilities, for example head boy and head girl, house captains and school councillors. Pupils lead the celebration assembly every Friday.

Pupils say bullying in school is very rare. However, they can talk about incidents that have happened online. School leaders take this very seriously and support pupils as if it had happened in school. Pupils know that if they 'screen shot' evidence, their teacher will help them.

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

The curriculum is planned around key character traits, such as resilience and compassion. This is to prepare pupils to become good citizens and future employees. School leaders have carefully sequenced knowledge and skills, to ensure that pupils can build on prior learning. Key vocabulary is taught explicitly. This is well established in mathematics and English. In other subjects, such as history, a new curriculum has been introduced this term. It has been written by specialist teachers from across the trust. This is already having an impact. In one history lesson visited, pupils could talk

confidently about how the ancient Greeks have had an impact on our lives today. However, pupils sometimes struggle to remember what they have learned in the past.

School leaders have prioritised reading since the last inspection. Pupils love to read. They can name their favourite author and talk enthusiastically about their class novel. A new library has been created. A weekly £1 book sale further encourages reading at home. School leaders have developed the St Bede's 'reading river', which is displayed in every classroom. These are quality books that pupils will read during their time in school.

Teachers receive regular training to ensure that phonics is taught consistently throughout school. Children begin learning letter sounds in Nursery. This prepares them for a swift start when they enter Reception. Timely checks are made to ensure that pupils are on track. Extra support is given to help pupils keep up and not fall behind their classmates. Books are carefully matched to the sounds that pupils are learning. However, sometimes reading fluency is poor. This makes it difficult for pupils to follow a story. Adults are skilled at supporting readers, for example reminding them how to sound out an unfamiliar word or modelling how to read with expression.

Pupils get off to a good start in mathematics. Parents are provided with counters and shapes to support learning at home before their children start Nursery. Pupils are developing a deeper understanding of number in Reception. Pupils' learning in mathematics follows an ambitious curriculum. Some pupils are provided with practical equipment, such as fraction wheels and plastic coins. This helps them to access the same learning as their classmates. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), an alternative curriculum is provided. In the lessons visited, pupils could talk about fractions as parts of a whole. They understood mathematical vocabulary, such as numerator and denominator. Pupils' work in their books shows that there has been a focus on basic skills, such as number and calculation, this term.

School leaders know the context of the school well and the community they serve. They are committed to providing all pupils with a rich diet of opportunities and experiences. For example, all pupils in key stage 2 will learn a musical instrument this year. Every child has a St Bede's passport. This lists 101 things a child should do during their time at school, for example visit the theatre or climb Roseberry Topping. The school offers a wide variety of after school clubs, for example basketball, craft, choir and games club.

The school's charitable work has received national recognition. For example, pupils have raised money through sponsored events and cake sales for the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD). Pupils were asked to produce a national assembly online.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders prioritise keeping all pupils safe in school. All staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are skilled in identifying any potential signs of harm. Appropriate referrals are made in a timely manner. The headteacher is tenacious when challenging professionals in order to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils. The priority consideration being 'what does life look like through the eyes of the child?'

Appropriate recruitment checks ensure that all adults are suitable to work in school.

Pupils learn how to stay safe online through the computing curriculum. For example, they know about 'catfishing', which is when you cannot trust the identity of the person you are talking to. Pupils know how to 'ghost' themselves to protect their own identity, and when to report a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils struggle to read fluently and with accuracy. Leaders should make sure that these pupils receive the additional support that they need to develop into strong readers.
- In some foundation subjects, the curriculum is new this term and has not had time to embed. Therefore, pupils' learning in these subjects does not yet build sufficiently on prior knowledge. Leaders should check carefully that plans are implemented and that pupils are knowing more and remembering more.
- Teachers have prioritised developing mathematical fluency since pupils have returned to school, following lockdown and school closures. They must now ensure that pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning skills.

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 predecessor school, St Bede's Catholic Primary School, to be good in October 2012.

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

Unique reference number	140442
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10200238
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	207
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Steve Holce
Headteacher	Bernadette Rizzi-Allan
Website	stbedesstockton.bhcet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides a breakfast club from 8am daily.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and senior leaders for English, mathematics, history, early years foundation stage and SEND. He met with the trust chief executive officer, school improvement partner and four governors, including the chair of the local governing body. Discussions were also held with a number of teachers and support staff.
- The quality of education was inspected by visiting lessons, meeting with a range of pupils and staff, looking at pupils' work and examining curriculum documentation. The inspector looked closely at reading, mathematics and history.

- The inspector considered the views of parents through face-to-face discussions and via the seven responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey which were received.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult, observed their behaviour moving around school and lunchtime, met with pupils formally to gather their opinions and held informal discussions across both days of the inspection.
- A wide range of safeguarding information and documentation was scrutinised, including referrals and attendance records.

Inspection team

Andy Jones, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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