

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Low Grange Avenue, Billingham TS23 3NN

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 June 2024

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Ruth Whyte. This school is part of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Academy 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) Mike Shorten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Joseph's know the school's three magic words well: ready, respect, safe. They know how to apply them to their lives. For example, pupils are ready to learn. They focus and follow instructions swiftly. Pupils show respect to visitors in school. They are polite and well-mannered. Pupils are safe. They know they can talk to adults who work at the school if they have a problem and they will help to sort it out.

The school offers pupils leadership opportunities, such as community ambassadors, to make a tangible difference to the community. For example, pupils make hygiene packs to support a homeless charity and plant trees to enhance their locality.

Year 6 prefects relish the opportunity to support other year groups in assembly and at playtime. They are effective role models for the younger pupils.

The school uses the trust's curriculum structure to teach pupils the wider curriculum subjects. The school is reviewing this and some aspects are in the early stages of development. This has not affected published outcomes in 2023.

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

The curriculum thinking begins in Nursery and builds progressively to Year 6. This ensures pupils have good starting and transition points throughout the school. The school has begun to make small adaptations to the trust's wider curriculum to meet the needs of their school community. For example, in history, pupils study Captain Cook, as a significant local historical figure.

The school provides teachers with a detailed curriculum, lesson plans and activity choices. However, the school has not considered the essential knowledge, in some wider curriculum subjects, it wants pupils to know and remember at the end of each unit.

At the start of each lesson there is a retrieval and recap element. At the end of a unit there is a task to check what pupils remember over time. However, linked to the lack of clarity around the essential knowledge, pupils struggle to recall previous learning. The school is working to enhance assessment in the wider curriculum to evaluate pupils' understanding more accurately.

The school prioritises the teaching of early reading. Staff check the sounds that pupils know regularly. They use this information alongside their knowledge of the pupils to group them based on their reading ability. This ensures that pupils access the right phonics teaching. The books pupils read match the sounds they know. Pupils confidently blend sounds in unfamiliar words. Pupils who are not keeping up with the programme have extra daily phonics lessons to practise the sounds further. Children in the early years develop their gross and fine motor skills effectively in 'squiggle and wiggle' time. Nursery children confidently copy the adult movements to practice handwriting patterns in readiness for holding a pencil.

There is an ambitious curriculum in place for mathematics. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are routinely addressed the same day through the immediate intervention sessions. These sessions tackle misconceptions and provide additional practice of mathematical concepts. The school focuses on building mathematical fluency in a dedicated daily session on either number bonds or times tables. Outcomes in the multiplication test check in 2023 were above the national average. The school completes regular checks on what pupils have learned in mathematics. It uses this to inform the retrieval aspects of each lesson. Children in Reception adeptly use the mathematical terms 'more' and 'less than' to compare numbers to 10. They are prepared well to access key stage one in the next academic year.

Since the pandemic, the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) at the school has doubled. The school has identified communication and language as a high need in their school cohort. Staff have received training from a local charity to implement strategies that benefit pupils, such as visual timetables, personal workspaces and access to sensory tents. However, there is more work to do to ensure plans for pupils with SEND are thorough and that pupil targets have a clear focus.

There is a whole school approach to teaching about healthy relationships and body changes in line with their Catholic ethos. For example, pupils know a positive relationship involves loyalty and kindness.

The trust has a clear picture of the strengths and next steps for the school. The local governing body receive termly reports from the headteacher. They use this information to challenge and hold leaders to account.

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 in the wider curriculum, the school has not identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn. This means that pupils struggle to remember important facts. The school should strengthen the curriculum and establish the essential knowledge pupils need to know across all subjects.
- Assessment in some subjects is not focused enough on the core components of pupils' learning. This, in part, is because the essential knowledge pupils need to know in some subjects is still to be identified. The school should refine and improve how pupils are assessed, ensuring checks on what pupils know cover the essential knowledge pupils learn in all subjects.
- There is variability in the quality of the support plans for pupils with SEND. This means the targets for some pupils are not specific and measurable. The school should improve the targets for pupils with SEND to help staff support pupils' needs more appropriately.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good before becoming an academy in December 2019.

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	142736
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10346578
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	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Ruth Whyte
Website	www.stjosephsbillingham.bhcet.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Academy Trust in December 2019.
- There is a local governing committee that help set the strategic direction of the school.
- The school is a Roman Catholic primary school. The most recent inspection of the school's religious character took place in June 2023.
- The school does not use any alterative providers.
- The school has nursery provision for three-year-old children.

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, curriculum leaders, staff and pupils.

- Meetings were also held with representatives of the local governing committee, the diocese, two deputy CEOs and the chair of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead 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 views of parents, staff and pupils were considered from meeting with them and from the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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