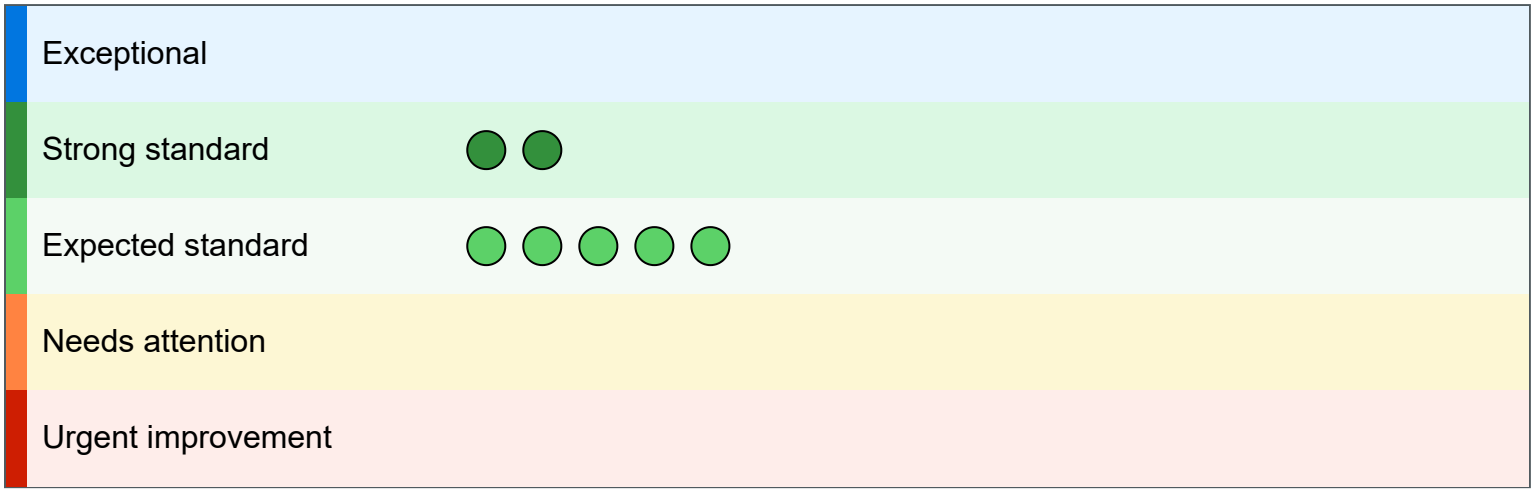
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Address: Garburn Place, Durham, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 7DE

Unique reference number (URN): 143515

Inspection report: 6 October 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils and have established a highly inclusive culture. Leaders identify pupil needs early. They provide support for pupils that is precise and well considered. Staff consistently follow the agreed school lesson structure. This routine and familiarity help to reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing. Staff provide subtle and purposeful support for individuals, which promotes independence. These actions help all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care, to settle quickly and engage fully in learning.

Leaders strengthen their inclusion through their work with specialist partners and parents and carers. Leaders carefully review pupils' progress. This enables them to make swift adaptations to ensure maximum impact. Leaders work closely with staff to ensure they have the resources and training required to provide high-quality support. For example, they use a range of strategies to support communication.

Disadvantaged pupils are well supported. Leaders use additional funding strategically to reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing and to increase pupils' access to a range of enrichment opportunities. Staff provide thoughtful pastoral support and build positive relationships with pupils. Because of this, pupils, regardless of their barriers, know they belong and achieve well.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders have created a detailed and purposeful personal development curriculum that precisely meets the needs of their pupils. The curriculum builds on knowledge over time to secure understanding. Pupils treat each other equally and have an impressive level of empathy. They can explain clearly how this prepares them for work and later life. Staff prioritise and provide pupils with high-quality pastoral support. Pupils know who to turn to if they have any worries or anxieties.

Leaders weave the British values through personal, social and health education and safety education. Pupils develop a detailed knowledge of the importance of a healthy lifestyle for both physical and mental health. They know what makes a healthy relationship and how to keep themselves safe, including online. Leaders ensure the curriculum is highly responsive to local and national needs, for example, prioritising water safety in the summer. This responsive approach continues through enrichment opportunities such as taking pupils to visit the specialist engineering college for a practical learning experience in response to pupil feedback.

Leaders closely track and analyse participation rates for clubs and visits to ensure that all pupils have access to a wide range of enrichment. Clubs and activities are provided through the school day to facilitate this. Leaders ensure that every child has the opportunity to go to the theatre, and all pupils are taught first aid. Leaders invite visitors to school who will enhance learning through practical activities as well as inspire pupils, for example, experiencing space in the planetarium and talking to their local member of parliament. Pupils also take on leadership roles, including school councillors, giving them opportunities

to support their peers. For example, the reading ambassadors work with younger children to instil a love of reading.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning and develop secure skills and knowledge across the curriculum. Pupils talk about their learning using appropriate vocabulary and can make links between learning. Where there are gaps in learning, effective support is provided to aid understanding. Staff focus on ensuring that pupils secure the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Because of this, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of learning.

Published outcomes show that by Year 6, most pupils achieve well, particularly in the standards expected at that age. Disadvantaged pupils often perform better than similar pupils nationally, and the school has higher than average outcomes for reading, writing and mathematics combined. Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check and Year 4 multiplication times table check are typically in line with national averages. However, in Year 6, fewer pupils achieve the higher standard than the national average.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders are proactive in their work with families to promote attendance both with parents and pupils. Adaptations are made to the school day to support attendance, and pupils are rewarded for high attendance. Leaders develop pupil aspirations to promote the value of education, and pupils understand this. Leaders work closely with families and carers to identify barriers to attendance and, where appropriate, arrange support from school staff or specialists. Actions from leaders have had a significant impact on pupils with persistent absence. Leaders have prioritised attendance in their strategic planning, and this is having a positive impact on attendance. Exceptional circumstances beyond leaders' control have reduced the impact of leaders' actions, and while attendance figures are below the national average, they have regained the momentum of improvement.

Pupils across school behave well. Staff model high expectations, which pupils respond positively to. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and are calm and considerate of the needs of others. They speak to each other with respect and show good manners. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that adults will help them if they need it. Leaders track behaviour patterns across school and take swift action where needed, which supports pupils with regulation and reflection.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have created a broad and rich curriculum that has clear learning steps from the early years to Year 6. Leaders are continually reviewing and refining their curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of pupils. They regularly check teaching and shape professional

development in line with the school's strategic plans. Leaders are proactive in developing teaching strategies that have a positive impact on pupils' learning, for example, creating consistency in language development and the use of practical resources.

Staff are skilful in their practice. They work through examples with pupils to help them to secure their understanding. Teachers build on previous learning to ensure that pupils secure new skills and knowledge effectively. They continually check what pupils know and adapt their teaching to support learning progress. Pupils with barriers to learning receive effective help.

The early skills of reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively. Teachers follow the school scheme for early reading and, typically, teaching is consistent. Where staff find errors in learning, they provide feedback to pupils to help them correct these. This encourages pupils to independently correct their own errors.

Early years

Expected standard

Children in the early years are happy and settled. They are confident in their learning environment and know the routines well. Staff provide care and support to promote wellbeing and welfare. Staff build positive relationships with children and work with parents and carers to create a smooth transition into school and to support learning progress.

Leaders have created a curriculum that develops children's skills and knowledge in small, logical steps from the start of the Nursery Year to the end of the Reception Year with clear end points. Leaders carefully track children's progress and make adaptations where needed. For example, they have increased the focus on language and vocabulary teaching to broaden children's communication skills.

Leaders create engaging and purposeful learning spaces, which children enjoy using. Resources are used effectively to develop learning, with a particular focus on developing the early skills for reading, writing and mathematics. Children enjoy sharing their favourite books with staff. Staff interactions develop learning effectively. They identify children with barriers to their learning swiftly and work with parents to provide tailored support that ensures progress. Because of this, children make steady progress from their starting points and are well prepared for Year 1.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders and governors share a strategic vision for school development with high aspirations for all pupils at the heart of it. They understand the context of their school, and the strengths and development areas. This informs their next actions. Leaders have high expectations for pupils and staff. They model the behaviours they expect from others with consistency. Leaders' actions are evident across school. They have had a positive impact on outcomes for pupils and are beginning to increase attendance levels in school.

Governors and trustees have a wide range of expertise. They provide leaders with appropriate support and challenge. Effective communication between school leaders, school governors and trustees enables detailed analysis of actions and their impact. Governors use

this information to review the impact of leaders' actions closely, compare data to wider schools and ask insightful questions to drive progress

Training is provided to ensure leaders and staff at all levels have the skills and knowledge needed to meet their statutory duties and fulfil their roles. Leaders extend professional development for staff by working collaboratively with wider schools and seeking advice from a range of professionals. Staff value these training opportunities. They also value leaders' consideration for their wellbeing and workload.

Leaders communicate with parents and carers in a range of ways, including regular opportunities to visit the school. They also regularly gather parents' and pupils' views about the school and use this to inform their future development plans.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

St Joseph's is a welcoming Catholic primary school where pupils know that they belong. They feel safe, happy and valued. Pupils are well cared for by a staff team who know them as individuals. Pupils behave well and behaviour across school is calm and purposeful. Pupils know the expectations for behaviour, and the school routines support pupils effectively. Across all ages, pupils show compassion and respect for others. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that staff act quickly when needed. When pupils need help to work through problems or worries, they know there are adults on hand to support them.

There is a range of opportunities for pupils to take on leadership responsibilities, for example, as school councillors and members of the wellbeing team. Pupils take great pride in providing support for their peers. They develop their confidence and a sense of community through their leadership responsibilities. Pupils take part in a variety of enrichment activities, which develop their skills and talents and build aspirations. They particularly enjoy their residential visit, lunchtime clubs and careers day, as well as learning how to administer first aid.

From the Nursery Year to Year 6, pupils develop independence and resilience and have a focused approach to their learning. Pupils enjoy taking part in engaging learning through a curriculum that is adapted to meet their needs. Pupils talk about their learning with enthusiasm. They take pride in their work and present it well. Pupils who have barriers to learning have their needs met and achieve well because of precise support from skilled staff.

The school celebrates pupils' achievements with parents and carers and places a high value on school attendance. Despite this, school attendance remains below the national average.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to develop the quality of the curriculum and teaching so that all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, achieve well.

- Leaders should continue their work to improve attendance so that all pupils attend regularly and often.

About this inspection

This school is part of the 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), Stuart McGhee, and overseen by a board of trust directors, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This inspection took place on 6 and 7 October 2026.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the school headteacher, school senior leaders, governors, trustees, colleagues from the trust, including the CEO, the diocese deputy director for education, school staff, parents and pupils during the inspection.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The school's previous section 48 inspection was in October 2025.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

At the time of inspection, there were 159 pupils on roll. The school's capacity is 175 pupils.

Headteacher: Kirsty Evans

Lead inspector:
Bec Yeadon, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Samuel Donaldson, Ofsted Inspector
John Lucas, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 6 October 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

150
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 268

School capacity

175
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

42.98%
Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.5%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.00%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.67%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	84%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	57%	61%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	84%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	57%	74%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	84%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	79%	72%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	89%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	86%	73%	Above

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	46%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75%	58%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	59%	Above

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Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	69%	21 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	67%	-17 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	81%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	78%	12 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	81%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	88%	79%	8 pp

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2025/26 (1 term)	7.5%	5.1%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	6.0%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.8%	5.5%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2025/26 (1 term)	36.7%	14.4%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	20.4%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	32.6%	14.6%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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