

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Newcastle

Goathland Avenue, Longbenton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE12 8FA

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 December 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Stephen Fallon. This school is part of Bishop Bewick 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), Anita Bath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Harrison.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy here. They thrive in a school that helps them to be the best they can be. The school has a highly ambitious curriculum that enables pupils to gain the knowledge and skills to succeed. Pupils leave this school well prepared for their next steps in learning. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve exceptionally well.

In and around school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils take great pride in their work and achievements. Starting in early years, staff foster caring relationships with children. These strengthen as pupils move through the school. Pupils feel safe and are well supported by staff.

The school weaves its high aspirations for pupils into wider opportunities for them. Pupils begin overnight residential visits in Year 3. Pupils grow in independence as they stay away for longer periods as they get older. Careers events help pupils to understand the world of work. Pupils speak to different professionals or visit nearby workplaces. This helps pupils aspire to be writers, lawyers and crime novelists. Interesting and diverse clubs help pupils explore different activities and try out new things. Pupils enjoy the Korean club or taking part in a competitive Lego club.

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

Pupils benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum. The school has revisited and refined with precision the key knowledge and skills pupils need to know. This helps pupils deepen their knowledge more effectively over time. Pupils demonstrate secure knowledge of different subjects. They confidently and accurately recall previous learning across wider curriculum subjects, for example the various artists they have studied, the chronology of different empires or different types of rocks.

The school teaches English and mathematics well. The curriculum for writing helps pupils write with precision and maturity. Older pupils explain with clarity how their individual writing improves over time. Pupils bring together their writing skills with their wider curriculum knowledge successfully. The mathematics curriculum helps pupils master calculation quickly. Pupils are proud of their increased fluency and speed when working with number. Pupils achieve highly in mathematics.

A well-structured phonics offer means pupils make a positive start to their reading journey. Pupils benefit from a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. This helps them become fluent readers quickly. Older pupils read widely. As well as carefully chosen books that they read for pleasure in class, they read texts connected to their learning in the wider curriculum. This helps them excel in reading by the time they leave school. Children in early years delight in practising the sounds they know with confidence. Vocabulary development is prioritised. From Nursery, children learn in a language-rich environment. Interactions between adults and children are purposeful and tailored to individual need.

The school ensures that staff are well skilled. Carefully planned training and collaborative working across the school ensure that staff support pupils with learning effectively. Careful questioning helps teachers check on pupils' understanding. This helps the school identify pupils who might need extra help. Staff quickly recognise the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This starts in early years, where staff have a precise understanding of children's emerging needs. Carefully planned interventions help pupils catch up if needed. As a result, all pupils make significant progress through the curriculum.

Classrooms are calm, industrious and focused. Pupils are eager to do well. Learning is rarely disrupted. Outside, pupils are highly active across a wide range of different activities. For example, pupils of all ages dance and sing in the performing arts area. Older pupils are proud to support younger pupils.

The school prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. Pupils demonstrate fundamental British values in their respect and tolerance for others. They are confident and articulate in discussions. They listen well to others and are not afraid to challenge ideas. They are reflective when discussing other faiths and religions. They are clear that everyone is welcome at their school. 'Agents of change' make a difference around school and in the community. They help with food at the local centre for the homeless and champion work to improve the environment.

Leaders, staff and those responsible for governance share an unwavering vision for what pupils can achieve. Strong shared practice and values help the school realise its ambition for the pupils who attend. The school carefully reviews and effectively refines its curriculum and wider offer to ensure it remains as strong and secure as it can be. Leaders share their effective practice across other schools within the trust. Parents and carers value highly the work of the school and the difference it makes in the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 predecessor school, St Stephens Roman Catholic Primary School Aided, to be good for overall effectiveness in January 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.

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	148981
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10346802
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	214
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Harrison
CEO of the trust	Anita Bath
Headteacher	Stephen Fallon
Website	www.ststephensprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.
- The school is a member of the Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and has a Christian character. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school offers a breakfast club and after-school club. They are both managed by the school.
- The school has Nursery provision for three-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.

- 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 spoke with the headteacher, the acting head of school and other leaders in the school.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector held discussions with leaders and staff responsible for attendance and behaviour.
- 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 gathered the views of parents informally in person and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with them. Pupils' views were considered through pupil meetings.
- The inspector spoke with representatives from the local governing committee, a director of the trust, the CEO of the trust, school improvement leaders from the trust and a representative from the diocese.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classes and at social times.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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