

Inspection of Blessed John Duckett Catholic Primary School, Tow Law

Smith Street, Tow Law, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL13 4AU

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 January 2025

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

The headteacher of this school is Jenna Ellison. 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, Stuart McGhee, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne Coates. There is also an executive headteacher, Jenna Ellison, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in the family atmosphere of this small, friendly school. Staff have created a nurturing environment for all pupils. They know the pupils and families well. Relationships are strong. Pupils trust staff to look after them. Pupils feel safe and valued.

The school has the highest ambition for all pupils, both in their learning and behaviour. Pupils rise to meet these expectations. They display positive attitudes to learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive highly effective support. They are fully involved in the life of the school.

Pupils are polite and respectful. They strive to embody the school's values, which include compassion, self-belief and honesty. Pupils behave consistently well in lessons and during social times.

The school offers pupils a range of wider opportunities. These excite and engage pupils while enhancing their learning. For example, visits beyond the school's rural locality to Durham and Newcastle ensure that pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning in the outdoor environment. Their work with local community groups teaches them to be accepting of difference.

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

The school has placed ambition for all at the centre of its curriculum thinking. This starts in the early years. The school's curriculum has been reviewed recently. It is carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils who are taught in mixed-age classes. Pupils have many opportunities to revisit and build on their prior learning.

However, the school recognises that the new curriculum needs further embedding. Presently, the school does not have a clear enough understanding of the difference that the new curriculum is making to pupils' learning. This is also the case with the mathematics curriculum, which has also been reviewed recently.

Staff are knowledgeable about their pupils' needs and ensure that all pupils are fully included in lessons. There are robust systems in place to ensure that pupils with SEND are identified swiftly. Through staff support and adaptations to the curriculum, pupils with SEND access the curriculum alongside their peers.

The school has created a culture where reading is a priority and celebrated. From the early years, children are introduced to nursery rhymes, songs and stories. Pupils learn letter sounds and words in a structured and well-ordered way. As pupils develop their phonics knowledge, they are provided with books that match the sounds they know. Pupils quickly gain the knowledge and skills to become confident, fluent readers. Those who struggle with learning to read are identified, and extra support is put in place to enable them to catch up quickly.

Children benefit from a well-designed curriculum in the early years. Staff make sure that children get off to a flying start. Children display a love for learning. They sustain

concentration in their play. Staff are experts at extending children's language through varied learning opportunities that promote discussion. For example, children were independently drawing maps of London, identifying landmarks and discussing similarities and differences within their own locality.

Improving attendance to be consistently in line with the national average is a school priority. The school works closely with families and external agencies to bring about improvement. Pupils understand the value of high attendance and are rewarded for it. The school has effective procedures in place to reduce absence. These are having a positive impact. The school is aware of the need to continue with these efforts.

Pupils have access to an effective personal, social and health education programme. There is a range of opportunities and experiences on offer to develop their confidence, character and resilience. For example, the school's eco-ambassadors work with a charity-based community group to improve the local environment. In the outdoor environment, pupils develop their curiosity through exploration and teamwork. In the weekly 'statement to live by' assemblies, pupils are encouraged to reflect, consider and discuss. Pupils learn about fundamental British values and diversity. They attend a range of clubs. Visits and residential trips further enhance pupils' learning.

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the school. Trustees and governors share this vision. They hold school leaders to account for school performance through considered support and challenge. The determination for all pupils to be successful is a priority shared by all. There are a number of training opportunities on offer for staff. The consideration given to staff's well-being and workload is appreciated. 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)

- Oversight of how well the new two-year curriculum is being implemented is at an early stage of development. This means that the school does not have a full and accurate view of how well pupils are learning the new curriculum. The school should ensure they understand how effective the new curriculum is in improving pupil's skills and knowledge.
- The school has recently made adaptations to the mathematics curriculum. This means that it is not yet fully embedded. The school should develop robust systems to identify when pupils are not progressing and provide them with the support needed.
- Some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. This means that they miss out on learning important knowledge in the curriculum. The school should

continue to work with families to improve pupils' attendance and ensure that the strategies in place are having a measurable impact.

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	148916
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346797
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	77
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
CEO of the trust	Stuart McGhee
Headteacher	Jenna Ellison
Website	www.blessedjohnduckett.bhcet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust in February 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school is a Catholic primary school within the Diocese of Durham. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in October 2023. The next inspection under section 48 is due within eight years of this date.
- The school offers breakfast club at the beginning of the school day. This is run by school staff and managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher. In addition, they met with the CEO of the trust, members of the trust board, a representative of the diocese and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 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.
- The responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Parent View, were reviewed. This included any free-text responses. The responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

Lynn Chambers, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Claire Williams

Ofsted Inspector

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