

Inspection of a good school: Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School, Kendal

Hawesmead Avenue, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5HB

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 June 2024

Outcome

Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School, Kendal continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Sarah Tansey. This school is part of the Mater Christi Multi-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), Jacky Kennedy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Murray.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this friendly and inviting school. They told the inspector that everybody is welcomed and made to feel equal at their school. Pupils look forward to seeing their friends each day, which helps them to feel happy. They appreciate the support that they receive from their teachers.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Typically, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), rise to these. They achieve well. Pupils were eager to showcase their learning to the inspector. They enjoy recognition for their efforts, such as by receiving certificates in celebration assemblies.

Pupils focus well on their learning during lessons. They generally behave well across the school. Pupils understand the school's motto of 'listen, learn, care'. They aim to follow this each day. This contributes to classrooms being calm and purposeful learning environments. Pupils are caring towards each other and towards staff.

The school aims to provide pupils with a broad range of experiences. For example, pupils enjoy clubs in science, art, archery and sports. Visits and trips, including to museums, theatres, castles and cities further afield, enrich their learning. Older pupils eagerly spoke about baking brownies at a nearby college.

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

The school has worked closely with the trust and with the local governing body to adopt a suitably balanced and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum has been strengthened during

recent years, to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education. The school has determined the small steps of knowledge that pupils should learn in each subject, and the order in which this should happen. Curriculum thinking begins in the early years, where children build the foundational knowledge that they need to be well prepared for key stage 1.

Staff benefit from training and support, which helps them to develop their knowledge of the subjects that they teach. Mostly, staff choose suitable learning activities and provide clear explanations to help pupils in understanding curriculum content. Nonetheless, in a few subjects, staff's effectiveness in delivering learning activities varies. At times, this limits how much and how well pupils learn the intended curriculum.

During lessons, teachers typically check pupils' understanding of new information and concepts well. In many subjects, teachers use assessment information effectively in order to ascertain how well pupils are learning. However, in a small number of subjects that the school has recently redeveloped, teachers do not establish well enough how secure pupils' previous learning is. Due to this, the gaps that some pupils have in their prior learning go unchecked and teachers move on to new curriculum content before pupils are ready. This slows pupils' progress in these subjects.

The school identifies pupils' additional needs early. It works in partnership with external professionals, and with parents and carers, to provide effective support for pupils with SEND. This enables these pupils to learn well alongside their classmates.

The school prioritises pupils' love of reading. For example, pupils enjoy visiting the school's well-stocked library and also the local library. The school has increased the range of texts that it provides. Older pupils spoke excitedly about the different books that they like to read. They particularly relished reading to their younger peers at a recent reading event. Younger pupils look forward to taking a 'reading suitcase' home to share a story and a hot chocolate with their families.

In the Nursery Year, children build their knowledge of spoken language through plentiful stories, songs and rhymes. Staff interact well with children during their play, which helps to prepare children for learning phonics in the Reception Year. The school has trained staff to deliver its well-established phonics programme effectively. Pupils read from books that match their phonics knowledge. Staff support a small number of pupils who struggle with their reading. Most pupils develop into confident and fluent readers.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They know the importance of attending school regularly and most do. The school and the trust have been successful in improving pupils' rates of attendance and reducing levels of persistent absence. Pupils value their education. They explained to the inspector that it will help them to reach their career goals in the future, such as being a palaeontologist, biologist, journalist or mathematician.

The school supports pupils' wider development well. Pupils learn how to stay healthy and how to keep safe, including while online. They have various opportunities to take on roles in school, for instance as librarians, assembly monitors and 'Mini Vinnies'. Pupils fundraise for charities, visit local care homes and produce artwork for the local community.

Staff said that the school is a happy place to work. They value the consideration given by the school, the trust and the local governing body to their workload and well-being. For example, they are asked for their opinions during reviews of policies and procedures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, some staff do not implement learning activities consistently well. This means that some pupils do not learn as much as they could. The school should support staff to deliver these subject curriculums more effectively so that pupils learn the intended curriculum well.
- In a small number of subjects, where curriculums have recently been refined, the school is still determining its strategies to check what pupils already know. This means that some pupils' gaps in prior learning are not addressed before teachers introduce new curriculum content. The school should fully embed curriculum improvements and ensure that teachers use assessment strategies well to identify and remedy gaps in pupils' prior knowledge.

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 predecessor school, Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School, to be good in April 2016.

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 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	148697
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10321475
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	170
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Murray
CEO of the trust	Jacky Kennedy
Headteacher	Sarah Tansey Clare Ritchie (acting headteacher)
Website	www.deangibson.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust.
- Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School, Kendal converted to become an academy school in September 2021. When its predecessor school, Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The headteacher was not present at the time of this inspection. The school was being led by an acting headteacher, who took up post in January 2024.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- This Roman Catholic school is in the Diocese of Lancaster. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in July 2022. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by July 2027.

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 this into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers. He spoke with some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at curriculum documentation and spoke with pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- The inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read with a familiar adult. He discussed reading with a group of older pupils.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. There were too few responses to Ofsted's pupil survey to consider.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school, including at breakfast club, at playtime and during lunchtime.
- The inspector met with the acting headteacher and other school leaders. He held meetings with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also spoke with representatives of the trust, including the CEO and the chair of the trust.
- The inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. He considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of trust and local governing body meetings and documents pertaining to pupils' behaviour and levels of attendance.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. He also spoke with staff about their workload and their well-being.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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