

Inspection of St Benet's Catholic Primary School, Ouston

St Benet's Way, Ouston, Chester le Street, County Durham DH2 1QX

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Catherine Young. This school is part of Bishop Wilkinson 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), Nick Hurn OBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Gannon.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Benet's Catholic Primary School, Ouston under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Benet's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as St Benet's Catholic Primary School, Ouston as a result of conversion to academy status. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this vibrant school. They embody the principles of the 'St Benet's way', being respectful, responsible and ready to learn. The school has high expectations for all pupil's achievement. Pupils achieve well in most areas. The Catholic ethos is at the heart of the school. Pupils feel safe, nurtured and valued and are aspirational for their future.

Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They speak to adults and visitors in the building with maturity. Pupils can learn without distraction. In lessons, pupils play an active part in their learning. Classrooms are purposeful environments. Pupils sensibly access a range of activities at lunchtimes. In the early years, children interact calmly and positively with each other.

Pupils have an exceptional understanding of fundamental British values. They show a deep respect for different faiths and cultures. This ensures that everyone is welcome at the school. Discrimination is not tolerated. If pupils have any concerns, they have trusted adults to speak to.

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

The school has settled after a turbulent year. The discovery of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) led to the enforced closure of most of the school building between September 2023 and June 2024. During this period, pupils accessed their education across three different sites. Staff, pupils and parents recognise the positive way that the school has responded to this challenge.

The school has developed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. The curriculum is knowledge-rich, and in some areas, such as history and geography, goes beyond the national curriculum. The school has identified the important knowledge that pupils will learn and broken this down into small chunks. Teachers have a good knowledge of the curriculum. They select engaging activities and deliver these with enthusiasm. Teachers regularly check pupils' knowledge and address any misconceptions. As a result, pupils have a strong understanding of most areas of the curriculum.

Historical inconsistencies in the delivery of the mathematics curriculum mean that some pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is not as strong as in other areas of the curriculum. The school has addressed this by making changes to the mathematics curriculum and providing training for staff on how best to deliver it. As a result, pupils have fewer gaps in their knowledge than they previously did.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well at the school. Pupils' needs are identified quickly and accurately. Staff skilfully adapt lessons to ensure all pupils access the curriculum. Pupils with SEND participate fully in school life.

Reading is prioritised across the school. The school expertly implements the phonics programme. Children start learning phonics straight away in Reception. The school

provides effective support for any pupils struggling with reading. As a result, most pupils quickly become fluent readers. Pupils develop a love of reading from Nursery through to the end of Year 6. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors. Pupils thoroughly enjoy reading at this school.

In the early years, staff support children effectively in developing their personal and communication skills. The early years curriculum provides the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that children need to successfully access key stage 1. The indoor environment supports children's learning well. However, the outdoor environment is less well developed and does not support learning as effectively.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. They are respectful and supportive of each other. Routines are embedded in the early years and are consistently applied to the end of Year 6. Pupils follow these without question.

The provision for pupils' personal development is excellent. The school develops positive character traits by promoting moral values and self-regulation across the curriculum. Pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, attend a wide range of extra-curricular clubs such as sports, arts and nature. Pupil leaders have a positive impact on the life of the school and the local community. The Years 5 and 6 buddies support Nursery and Reception children, and the key stage 2 Minni Vinnies collect food for a local food bank.

The school is ably supported by the local governing body and the trust. Those responsible for governance provide support and challenge to ensure the school is continually improving. The school works closely with the diocese. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and well-being. Staff feel well supported. They enjoy working here and are proud of 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)

- Over time, the delivery of the mathematics curriculum has been inconsistent. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and are currently not achieving as well as they might. The school should continue its work to address the gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge.
- The outside learning environment in early years is not developed as effectively as it could be. As a result, some children do not learn as well as they could beyond the classroom. The school should improve its use of the outside environment to ensure it supports children's learning well.

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	148205
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10297504
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	215
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Gannon
CEO of the trust	Nick Hurn OBE
Headteacher	Catherine Young
Website	www.stbenetsouston.bwcet.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust in March 2021.
- The school provides a breakfast and an after-school club for its pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector discussed any continued impact of RAAC with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the CEO of the trust, members of the trust board, including the vice-chair of the trust, and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and the safeguarding and attendance leads.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. Inspectors also considered the quality of education in geography and art.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at social times, at lesson change-over and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils about the school's programme of personal development.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and carers, and staff through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Chris Sergeant, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deb Ward

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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