

Inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Beechwood Avenue, St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Darlington, County Durham DL3 7HP

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement
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The headteacher of this school is Katie Whitehead. This school is part of 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, Mike Shorten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

What is it like to attend this school?

The multi-academy trust has set out core values for every school in the trust, and the first is 'being just and responsible'. The pupils in this school are wonderful ambassadors for this core value. Pupils have a secure understanding of justice and fairness. Older pupils understand the importance of protected characteristics. They say that discrimination is not tolerated in this school.

Pupils like the new behaviour policy. They behave well, taking responsibility for their own actions. This strong culture of equality, justice and fairness helps everyone to feel happy and safe in school.

As they are part of a Catholic school, pupils from St Augustine's are at the heart of parish life. The parish provides leadership opportunities for pupils at Mass on Sundays. Once a month, pupils are invited to have lunch with parishioners. This helps to develop pupils' social skills, and their sense of belonging to the church community.

Many parents say that this school has been 'transformed' since the last inspection. The school has raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. The quality of education is improving rapidly. As a result, pupils' results are rising year on year. The school is not complacent. It is taking effective action to continue raising attainment for all pupils.

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

In all key stages, and in all core subjects, pupils achieve results that are above the national average at the expected standard. This is not the case at the higher standard. Some pupils are not achieving as well as they should. The school has robust assessment arrangements in place, but teachers are not using this information well enough to inform their planning. This holds some pupils back. It also leads to a small number of pupils becoming restless in the classroom. This is because they are not engaged in their learning.

Pupils are extremely polite, and they behave well in lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive overall. Pupils have high levels of self-control and respect for others. Any restlessness in the classroom does not escalate to behaviour that disrupts learning.

There are some excellent examples of high-quality written work when pupils are motivated and enjoying their learning. However, this quality declines when pupils are less engaged in the classroom. The school is fully aware of this. It has clear steps in place to address the consistent quality of pupils' work through the priorities in its school development plan.

The school attends local authority network meetings, along with staff from pre-school settings, to share information about children before they start school.

Children are invited to 'stay and play' mornings and a teddy bears picnic in the summer term, to help children get ready for starting school. In September, each child prepares an 'All about me' shoebox containing treasures that they would like to talk about with their new friends. This helps children to form positive attachments with their peers and settle quickly and happily.

No time is wasted before phonics lessons begin. Information is shared with parents to help them support their children's early reading. The school uses a translation app to ensure that parents who speak English as an additional language do not miss out.

Early reading is taught well. However, the school's expectations of some pupils are not high enough. For example, key stage 1 pupils are given frequent repetition of prior phonics learning that many pupils do not need. Their phonics knowledge is already fully secure. This reduces the time available for some pupils to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to achieve at the higher standard.

The school has raised expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff appreciate the additional training that the trust has provided to help them meet the needs of pupils with SEND effectively. Pupils with SEND are making good progress from their individual starting points.

Staff are very positive about the many improvements since the last inspection. Higher expectations have been introduced alongside effective management of teachers' workload. This supports staff to implement changes smoothly.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school's work. The school helps older pupils to consider moral and ethical issues. The school trained all Year 6 pupils in how to develop a persuasive argument to present a point of view, and improved pupils' listening skills to consider alternative viewpoints. Some pupils were chosen to represent the school in a trust-wide debate. Pupils are developing a rounded education that is preparing them well for adult life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not use assessment consistently well to plan learning. Some pupils do not deepen their knowledge and progress through the curriculum as well as they should. The school should ensure that their expectations are sufficiently high in all subjects, and that learning is well matched to the needs of pupils, so that all pupils achieve as well as they should.

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	139531
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10323052
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Katie Whitehead
Website	www.staugustines.bhcet.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 January 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust.
- The headteacher has changed since the last inspection. Two interim headteachers supported the school from January 2022 until the current headteacher's appointment in September 2022.
- This Roman Catholic school has a Christian character. The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle completed a section 48 inspection in September 2019. The diocese evaluated the school as outstanding. Section 48 re-inspection dates have been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 met the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator. The reading, mathematics and history subject leaders met inspectors separately.
- A meeting was held with several trustees and governors.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chief executive of the trust, along with both deputy chief executives, and with a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- In addition to deep dive subjects, inspectors evaluated evidence of pupils' learning in English and geography. Inspectors visited lessons in Reception Year in addition to the early years lessons that were visited during deep dive evidence gathering.
- Inspectors met with senior staff who lead the wider curriculum. Inspectors also discussed this with pupils, including in single-sex groups.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety were evaluated at breakfast club, in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtime.
- 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 reviewed Ofsted Parent View and spoke to several parents before the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Tracey Ralph, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sonia Fraser

Ofsted Inspector

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