

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

Mill Lane, Gilesgate, Durham DH1 2JQ

Inspection date:

14 January 2025

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Gilesgate has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is David Miller. 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.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils in this school benefit from a highly inclusive culture where everyone is treated equally, irrespective of their background. The school celebrates difference and, as a result, pupils are welcoming and friendly. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. It explicitly teaches pupils how to behave appropriately and respectfully. As a result, the school environment is calm and orderly. Pupils feel safe here.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. Increasing numbers of pupils are starting to achieve the school's high expectations, particularly in phonics and writing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have access to the school's internal provision. Here, they benefit from a therapeutic approach and a bespoke curriculum that is tailored to their needs.

There is a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. For example, pupils learn to play the violin and can attend extra-curricular clubs after school. Pupils can take on purposeful leadership roles, such as becoming an equalities ambassador. Through this role, pupils learn about the protected characteristics and promote awareness of these among their peers. The school provides opportunities for pupils to play an active role in the local community and to fundraise for charities.

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

The school recognises that some published outcomes for pupils are significantly below national expectations, particularly in mathematics. Consequently, it has undertaken a review of the curriculum and the way in which this is taught. The school has now created a coherently designed and ambitious curriculum in all subjects. Staff have received, and continue to receive, comprehensive training so that they become experts in the subjects that they lead and teach. Consequently, many pupils are now achieving well. These improvements have not been in place for long enough to be reflected in the published data.

The school prioritises the teaching of early reading. Staff teach the phonics programme very effectively. Pupils achieve well in phonics. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. Those who struggle with learning phonics are identified quickly and supported to catch up with their peers. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they know. As pupils move through the school, they benefit from the school's 'reading canon'. This consists of high-quality texts that include characters from a range of cultures and backgrounds.

In the wider curriculum, the school has worked closely with the trust to devise sequences of learning that start in the Nursery and run through to Year 6. Children in the early years are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school has thought carefully about how the curriculum in the early years prepares children for what they will learn in Year 1. Pupils can talk about their learning in subjects such as history and mathematics. However, the way the curriculum in some subjects is delivered means that not all pupils' needs are met consistently. Sometimes, pupils are expected to complete tasks that are too hard for them. At times, they are expected to listen for long periods. This affects their ability to concentrate.

Teachers regularly check what pupils know and remember. They use the information from these checks to address gaps in pupils' knowledge effectively. Staff are alert to pupils with potential SEND. These pupils are identified quickly and receive the support that they need to access the curriculum.

Over time, pupils' attendance at school has improved, and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. However, the school is currently experiencing a decline in attendance. While it has systems in place to support families with attendance, some pupils still do not attend regularly enough. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

The school prepares pupils well for life beyond the school gates. Educational visits are used to develop pupils' knowledge and readiness for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils visit a mosque and take part in residential activities. Pupils can talk confidently about how to keep themselves safe, particularly online. The school's work to teach pupils about risks in their local area is strong. Through the personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils learn about different relationships and develop an age-appropriate understanding of what healthy relationships look like.

Leaders have a realistic view of the school's current position and are ambitious for its future. The trust provides effective support to leaders and staff. Staff appreciate this. They are proud to work at the school and recognise leaders' efforts to improve their workload and well-being. Governors are passionate about supporting the school. They understand their role and fulfil this effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some lessons, the curriculum delivery is not sufficiently adapted to meet some pupils' needs. This results in a minority of pupils becoming disengaged or being expected to complete tasks that are too challenging. The school should ensure that it continues to support all staff to adapt their curriculum delivery so that all pupils can achieve their full potential.
- Some disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND do not attend school as regularly as possible. This means that they frequently miss out on important learning and are at risk of falling behind their peers. The school should continue its work to tackle low attendance so that these pupils attend as regularly as their peers.

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 Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham, to be good for overall effectiveness in September 2013.

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	148704
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346772
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	89
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Gannon
CEO of the trust	Nick Hurn OBE
Executive headteacher	David Miller
Website	stjosephsgilesgate.bwcet.com
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Gilesgate converted to become an academy school in September 2021. When its predecessor school, St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good for overall effectiveness.
- The school opened a nursery in September 2022. The nursery admits children from the term after their third birthday.
- An executive headteacher oversees this school and four others. There is also a head of school.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is a Catholic primary school in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The last inspection of the school's religious character took place in March 2024.
- A breakfast club operates daily. This is run by school staff and overseen by the governing body.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, head of school, vice-chair of the board of trustees and the deputy CEO of the trust. An inspector also spoke with the director of education from the diocese.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered how the school caters for pupils' wider development by reviewing the curriculum for personal, social and health education, speaking to single-sex groups of older pupils and undertaking a tour of the school with pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at unstructured times was observed.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View. This included reviewing any free-text responses. They also considered the responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Philippa Kermotschuk, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Zoe Carr

Ofsted Inspector

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