

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

Great Lime Road, Forest Hall, Great Lime Road, Forest Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE12 7AB

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 March 2025

Outcome

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

The headteacher of this school is Mrs Siobhan Foster. This school is part of Bishop Bewick 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), Anita Bath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Harrison.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's is an inclusive and welcoming school. Pupils are safe in school and conduct themselves well. Relationships are strong between adults and pupils. Pupils are proud of their school and said they would definitely recommend it to others. Parents and carers are extremely positive about how staff care for their children and nurture their potential.

The school has high aspirations of what all pupils can achieve and how they should behave. Pupils happily rise to meet these expectations. Pupils hear from a range of visitors, including those who teach sign language. This helps pupils to think about their career aspirations and to develop their knowledge of the subjects they study.

Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities, including as members of the student council. They have a voice around improvements to the school. For example, pupils led a project around feeling safe and included where they helped their peers to develop a child-friendly version of the safeguarding policy and procedures. Some pupils are young librarians, who take great pride in promoting reading by offering books and areas to read comfortably at breaktimes. Others are role models through their 'mini Vinnies' work to support local charities, where they organise activities to raise money and awareness of local charities.

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

The school's curriculum has been carefully considered. It enables most pupils to achieve well. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge. The school supports a number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff welcome support from the trust and other external professionals in ensuring they identify those with SEND and then develop approaches which can best support these pupils.

Reading is at the centre of the curriculum at St Mary's. The school selects high-quality texts for pupils to study as part of the English curriculum. It carefully considers how they link with other subject areas to deepen pupils' knowledge and rich vocabulary. Children in the Reception Year benefit from hearing stories being read aloud regularly. They are keen to join in with retelling stories.

The school's chosen phonics programme is delivered consistently well. As a result, pupils become fluent and confident readers. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise new sounds and recap previously learned ones. Staff carefully track pupils' progress through the phonics programme. They put in place any additional support that is needed. This ensures that pupils with gaps in their reading knowledge catch up quickly.

Pupils' learning in the wider curriculum is sometimes variable. The school has carefully considered the topics pupils will learn, and how their knowledge will build over time. Staff use thoughtful questioning to help pupils develop their understanding further. Most pupils develop subject-specific skills, knowledge and vocabulary. However, there is a small number of pupils who are not making the progress through the curriculum that they should. Teachers do not consistently adapt teaching and learning to meet the needs of all pupils in the class. On occasion, staff do not choose the most appropriate learning tasks to match the aims of the curriculum.

The school is committed to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about the many traditions and cultures found in their local and wider communities. They talk about the way they support local charities and learn about the issues faced by refugees who have moved to the area. Pupils show confidence in their understanding of healthy food and keeping fit. They learn about what makes a healthy relationship and how to keep themselves safe online.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Most pupils meet them without the need for reminders. The school identifies patterns of behaviour over time. This means that the school can consistently bring about improvements in pupils' behaviour. Pupils enjoy playtimes and interact sensibly when participating in games or eating their lunch. They show kindness towards each other, for example helping a friend after a fall in the playground. Staff skilfully support the very small number of pupils who, at times, struggle with their behaviour. They ensure that pupils develop their resilience and demonstrate more positive behaviour. This means disruption to learning is reduced. Pupils attend well. They recognise the importance of coming to school regularly and take pride in attending school.

Trust leaders and local governors know the school well and understand their roles and responsibilities.

Staff describe the positive, family feel of working at the school. They appreciate the high-quality professional development provided. Staff say that leaders are considerate of their well-being and find ways to reduce their workload where possible.

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 subjects, the work that teachers give to pupils does not consistently meet the aims of the school's curriculum. The school should ensure that all pupils receive appropriate work, in line with the planned curriculum, so that pupils can develop their understanding of the intended learning.
- At times, there is not detailed enough adaptation of the curriculum for pupils' different starting points. Therefore, some pupils are not able to build successfully on what they already know. The school should ensure that staff adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils, so that they can build their knowledge and skills successfully over time.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, to be good for overall effectiveness in September 2017

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	148980
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10346801
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	194
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Harrison
CEO of the trust	Anita Bath
Headteacher	Siobhan Foster
Website	www.stmarysrcprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Forest Hall, converted to become an academy school in April 2022. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School Aided, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good for overall effectiveness.
- The school is part of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.
- The most recent inspection of the school's religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was carried out in September 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due within eight years of that date.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, teachers, support staff, pupils, members of the local governing body, a member of the diocese, the CEO of the trust and the chair of board of the trust.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to curriculum leaders, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Catherine Beard, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025