

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Benwell

Armstrong Road, Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE15 6JB

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2024

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

The executive headteacher of the school is Paul Brown, who is responsible for this school and one other. There is also a head of school, Sharon Rogan. The school is part of the 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?

The school is a warm and caring place where staff know pupils and their families well. There is a strong feeling of community at the school. Pupils smile broadly and are proud as they greet visitors to their school. The values of love, trust and respect are well understood by all. The school welcomes those from different faiths and cultures with open arms. Staff ensure that every pupil, no matter their background, is happy, safe and thrives during their early education.

St Joseph's is a haven for those who attend it. Pupils trust staff to help them if they need it. The school has high expectations for all its pupils. Pupils are well behaved and enthusiastic about their learning. Many children begin the early years curriculum unable to speak English. By the time they complete their journey at the school, they are confident, articulate and have often made excellent academic progress.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the many opportunities that the school provides outside of the classroom. These include trips to local art galleries, historical sites, a working farm and residential visits. The school helps pupils to prepare for life beyond education by planning enrichment weeks linked to careers, other faiths and the local environment.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils to read confidently. Children in the early years learn familiar stories, rhymes and songs to develop their language skills. Older pupils become fluent in their reading through the expert teaching of the phonics curriculum. Those who struggle to read receive effective support. The school's approach to teaching phonics is

highly successful. Leaders continually explore how to get more pupils reading a wider range of texts for pleasure.

The school has designed a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Results in external assessments have been very positive over time. Pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills are a particular strength of the school. The curriculum in all subjects is ambitious, relevant and well understood by staff. However, what pupils will learn and in what order has not been clearly identified in some subjects. This impacts on how effectively the foundation subjects are taught. It also impacts on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum over time.

Opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas are frequent. Children in the early years are taught to be inquisitive in their learning. High-quality discussions in classrooms help to strengthen pupils' language and listening skills. Across the curriculum, the extent to which pupils' knowledge and understanding are checked is somewhat inconsistent. As a result, opportunities to address misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge are sometimes missed.

Staff are thoroughly trained to support pupils with additional needs. Support staff are an asset in the classroom and help pupils with SEND to achieve to the best of their ability. In the early years, children with SEND are quickly identified using a range of strategies. Targeted support is provided. The needs of pupils with SEND are well met as they progress through school.

The school understands the importance of the early years curriculum as a foundation for later learning. The school has deliberately planned how children will use learning resources inside the classroom to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. However, in the outdoor area, learning activities are not as well considered. Adults sometimes miss opportunities to help children develop a wide range of vocabulary. This limits the impact of the early years curriculum on some children's development.

Leaders have made it a priority to ensure that differences are recognised and celebrated by pupils. Pupils appreciate their own and each other's uniqueness. Intolerant language and/or bullying is never accepted. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. When individuals struggle to attend school regularly, leaders quickly identify why this might be the case and provide excellent support.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education is well planned and highly relevant to the school's context. The school works closely with pupils and parents to help them recognise online risks and those they might face in the wider community. Pupils learn the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. At social times, pupils are active and enjoy a range of sports.

The school is well led and managed. Resources are carefully allocated to make the most of the skills and knowledge within the staff body. Workload and well-being are well considered. Staff feel empowered to bring about change. They value the wide variety of professional development opportunities on offer. Governors are skilled and

knowledgeable. They are active members of the school community and highly committed to their roles.

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 foundation subjects, what pupils will learn and in what order is not clearly set out. This means that staff do not focus consistently on the most important knowledge, skills and vocabulary pupils need to learn. The school should review each foundation subject to ensure its curriculum builds on prior learning. The school should ensure that staff check pupils' understanding before teaching new content.
- In the early years, planned opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills are better planned in some areas of the provision than they are in others. This reduces the impact of the curriculum because some children do not develop their skills and knowledge as well as they might. The school should review its outdoor learning provision in particular, to ensure it helps children develop their literacy and numeracy skills effectively.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, to be good in November 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 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	148812
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10323152
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	226
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Harrison
Headteacher	Paul Brown
Website	www.stjosephsrcprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became part of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust in October 2021.
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in October 2021. When its predecessor school, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and several other senior leaders have joined the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average at the school.
- The school is a voluntary aided school with a religious character. The previous inspection of denominational education given to pupils and the content of the school's collective worship, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was carried out in February 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, section 48 inspections were suspended and the inspection window was extended by up to eight years. Therefore, the next section 48 inspection is due between February and September 2028. The school is part of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector also spoke with a CEO and trustees as well as meeting members of the local governing body. The inspector spoke with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils and teachers 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 observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. The inspector also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying. The inspector spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils about the school's programme of personal development and careers provision.
- The inspector considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This includes the comments submitted via the free-text facility. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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