

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

Moorhouse Lane, Ashington NE63 9LR

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Inspection dates:

21 and 22 January 2025

## Outcome

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

The executive headteacher of this school is David Sutcliffe. This 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?

Pupils are happy and well behaved and enjoy coming to school. They feel safe as adults are caring and listen to them if they have any worries. Pupils are kind and respectful of each other. They demonstrate good manners and are polite.

In lessons, pupils help each other if they get stuck. They listen attentively when their classmates are explaining an answer. Pupils enjoy working in groups. They take turns and make sure everyone gets a chance to join in. Pupils celebrate their friends' achievements. Pupils understand there are different types of bullying. It is not an issue, but pupils are sure that adults would step in to help if it ever happened.

Staff have high expectations of pupils to work hard and behave well. Pupils achieve highly, particularly by the end of key stage 2. The school's five values are revisited daily and underpin the ethos of the school. Adults and pupils have good relationships which creates a calm atmosphere for pupils to learn in. The school is warm and welcoming.

The new early years outdoor areas have improved the school environment. Children in early years now have a pleasant area in which to learn and play. Pupils are actively involved in a range of leadership roles. School council and play leader responsibilities help pupils develop confidence and independence.

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

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. It includes regular opportunities for pupils to revisit the knowledge they have studied. As a result, pupils secure knowledge and are able to apply it confidently. For example, in geography, pupils can explain what an eco-system is and apply this knowledge when learning about rainforests. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and do not know. Teachers adapt the curriculum to help pupils keep up and stay on track. Pupils achieve well. Published results at the end of key stage 2 are significantly above national average.

Actions carried out by the new leadership team have had a positive impact across all parts of the school. Leaders identified quickly that improvements were required in the early years foundation stage, how pupils were learning to read and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Recent appointments and the restructuring of adults' roles and responsibilities mean there is now much greater capacity for the school to continually improve.

The school has recently introduced a new early reading programme. It is helping pupils to learn letter sounds in a systematic manner. Pupils sound out letters, blend and read with accuracy and confidence. Reading books are accurately matched to pupils' knowledge. This helps them to practise and embed the sounds they are learning. However, some pupils still do not know their sounds as well as they should because of historical weaknesses in the former reading programme. As a result, some pupils are not developing the reading knowledge and skills they require.

Staff accurately identify the needs of pupils. Pupils with SEND receive additional support from adults and use extra resources when required. This helps pupils access the full curriculum. For example, pupils use pictures alongside text to help them understand vocabulary. The additional support that pupils with SEND receive helps pupils to achieve well.

Pupils behave and conduct themselves well. They understand the behaviour expectations in school. Pupils like the reward systems in place, particularly when these achievements are shared with parents. Many pupils strive to be 'star of the week'. The school generally provides appropriate support for pupils who find behaviour more of a struggle. However, at times, some pupils do not receive the support from adults they need to help them manage their behaviours or access the curriculum.

Leaders monitor school attendance rigorously. They work in partnership with the education welfare officer to support families where pupils find attendance more of a challenge. Pupils are punctual and attend school regularly.

The school's personal development programme teaches pupils how to be respectful, responsible citizens. Pupils take part in community events such as singing at a local supermarket, making cards for local elderly residents and supporting the food bank. They

also learn about global initiatives such as Mary's Meals. Pupils have a good understanding of charity and the world beyond Ashington.

School governance is a strength of the school. Governors and trustees know the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide challenge and support to school leaders. Staff well-being and workload are carefully considered. Staff feel valued and enjoy working at the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- At times, some staff do not meet the needs of pupils with SEND or those who need support with their behaviour consistently. As a result, pupils do not always receive the support they require to help them access the curriculum or regulate their behaviours. The school should provide training for staff so they are able to provide high-quality, timely support when required.
- Some pupils are unable to learn the phonics programme as they do not have the required reading knowledge. Therefore, pupils miss out on valuable teaching time and do not develop the reading skills and knowledge they should. The school should improve the phonics programme to ensure pupils receive content matched to their knowledge.

## **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, St Aidan's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2021.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148504
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10346768
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Harrison
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Anita Bath
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Sutcliffe
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-aidans.northumberland.sch.uk">www.st-aidans.northumberland.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Aidan's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in April 2022. When its predecessor school, St Aidan's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good for overall effectiveness.
- The school joined the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust in April 2022.
- The executive headteacher has been in post for 12 months.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation of the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and has

taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other leaders, along with a range of staff. Meetings were held with governors, trustees, the CEO and a representative of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning, heard pupils read 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 views of parents and carers were gathered through Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector scrutinised a variety of documents. These included safeguarding records, attendance information, the school improvement plan and the minutes of governing body meetings.

### **Inspection team**

David Milligan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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