

Inspection of a good school: St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Pelaw

Rothbury Avenue, Pelaw, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE10 0QY

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

Outcome

St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Pelaw continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Maria Robinson. 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, Nick Hurn OBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Angela Boyle.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this friendly and welcoming school. Staff model respect and kindness towards each other and to pupils. This makes everyone feel part of the school 'family.' The school has high expectations for pupils to achieve the best. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils achieve well across the curriculum and exceptionally well in reading.

The school's programme for character development is exemplary. In early years, children are taught the school's rules which include respecting others, being honest and fair. Children quickly learn these important values. The school ensures that pupils develop into valued citizens through leadership opportunities such as house captains, elected school council members and corridor buddies. Staff are always on hand to help pupils resolve any problems. Pupils talk to staff about their worries. Any problems are quickly sorted out. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils enjoy learning. They understand the importance of attending school every day. Pupils are highly motivated to do their best. Pupils are proud to achieve rewards for reflecting the school's values. They particularly enjoy having afternoon tea with the headteacher. Pupils work together well in lessons. Even the youngest children in the school show excellent cooperation during play time and in group sessions.

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

The school has implemented a well-designed curriculum from Nursery to Year 6. Subject curriculum plans show the sequence of important knowledge that pupils must learn. All pupils study the same ambitious curriculum, including pupils with SEND. Leaders have

recently made some adaptations to a small number of subjects. These changes reflect the local context and changing needs of the pupils in the school. For example, the art and design curriculum includes a range of diverse and local artists. However, leaders do not know precisely how well pupils are learning these updated curriculums.

Teachers have expertise in the subjects that they teach. They make lessons interesting. Teachers model expectations using clear explanations. Pupils revisit important vocabulary often. In each lesson, teachers make meaningful links between different topics and subjects, such as exploring and celebrating cultural diversity in art and design. This includes children in Reception creating art in the style of Brazilian artist Beatriz Milhazes. In Year 2 pupils are inspired by Clarice Cliff and in Year 4 pupils learn art techniques through the work of Yinka Shonibare.

In the early years children learn to count. Staff make activities exciting to help engage children. For example, the 'counting cat' encourages children to spot the missing number. Children recognise quantities of objects without the need to count the objects first. Staff are swift to support children. As a result, children learn to count forwards and backwards accurately in Year 1. In some mathematics lessons for older pupils, opportunities to support pupils and move learning forward are sometimes missed.

The school supports all pupils to develop into confident and fluent readers. Pupils love reading from the wide range of texts on offer. For example, Roald Dahl's 'The Witches' and William Shakespeare's 'Macbeth.' Phonics starts straight away in Reception. Children gain confidence by reading to staff often. Staff make sure that pupils read books that contain the words and sounds that they know. In reading lessons or when listening to children read, staff make regular checks to identify pupils who need extra support and spot when pupils are ready to move on. As a result, pupils achieve extremely well in reading.

The school identifies pupils' SEND needs well. Pupils' support plans contain precise information. This helps staff to support these pupils to access a full curriculum alongside their peers. The school continues to improve provision for pupils with SEND. For example, providing resources such as visual timetables and sloped boards to aid writing. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

The school supports pupils' wider development extremely well. The variety of clubs, visits and visitors ensure children experience a range of activities to broaden their interests. Experiences include craft club, choir, a virtual meeting with religious teachers and football for boys and girls. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Activities such as daily meditation include all pupils. Pupils enjoy engaging in activities in the local community such as playing bowls at a local club. Litter picking and engaging with community police helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

Governors work well with the school to support leaders and check that actions taken are improving the school. Staff value the professional development opportunities on offer. They appreciate the school's efforts to look after their well-being and reduce workload. Staff feel proud to work at the school.

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 mathematics lessons, checks on pupils' learning are less effective than in other subjects. Opportunities to adapt teaching to support pupils and move learning forward are sometimes missed. The school should ensure that teaching consistently supports pupils to be ready to move on to more complex content.
- Some of the changes to improve the curriculum are more recent. The school does not have a full picture of how well pupils are remembering important subject knowledge. The school should monitor the impact of the updated curriculums to ensure pupils are remembering important content long-term.

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 Alban's Catholic Primary School to be good in June 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	148410
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10297521
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	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Angela Boyle
Headteacher	Maria Robinson
Website	www.stalbanspelaw.bwcet.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Pelaw converted to become an academy school in March 2021. When its predecessor school, St Alban's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school joined Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust in March 2021.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2023 and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2024.
- The school is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The last inspection of the school's religious character (section 48) was in April 2018. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, the deputy chief executive officer of the trust, chair of the trust, members of the local governing board, including the chair. The inspector also spoke to the acting director of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on the telephone.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector also talked to parents to gain their views of the school. The inspector considered the responses received through Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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