

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic Primary School

Strathclyde Avenue, St Bede's RC Primary School, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 7DS

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming school. They forge positive relationships with their peers and with staff. Pupils are polite and respectful as they interact with each other. They typically live up to the school's high expectations of their behaviour. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils work hard in lessons and listen carefully to staff. Children in the early years are eager to engage in activities and demonstrate high levels of concentration in their learning.

The school is ambitious for its pupils, however, pupils have not always achieved as well as the school would like. Over the past few years, the school has made considerable changes to its curriculum to improve pupils' learning across all subjects. However, many of these changes are at an early stage of development. This means that there is currently variability in how well pupils' knowledge develops across subjects.

Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the school and to the wider community. For example, they spoke about planting trees and taking part in recycling initiatives through their roles as 'eco-warriors'. Pupils develop their interests and talents through attending a wide range of activities after school. These include choir, art and a variety of sports clubs.

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

The school is vigilant in identifying the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND). It meets these needs well. The school has recently strengthened its adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum, so that pupils with SEND can successfully access the learning.

Children get off to a strong start in the early years. They access a rich and engaging curriculum that builds progressively over time. However, in Years 1 to 6, many of the subject curriculums are new and are still being refined. In some of these subjects, the school has not clearly defined the essential knowledge that pupils should learn. This hinders the school from ensuring that pupils' learning builds securely. It also makes it difficult for staff to design activities that focus on the most important knowledge that pupils should know. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they could across the wider curriculum and struggle to remember key knowledge in the longer term.

The Year 1 phonics outcomes in 2024 were significantly lower than average. Following this, the school has taken effective action to prioritise and improve its work in early reading. The school has developed staff's expertise and has made changes to strengthen the delivery of the phonics programme. The school provides effective support to pupils who struggle with reading. These improvements are helping pupils to gain the knowledge and skills that they need to become fluent readers. It is too early to see this reflected in published outcomes for phonics.

In some subjects, and in the early years, the school has effective systems in place to check how well pupils' knowledge is developing. However, in some subjects, these checks

on learning are still being developed. They are not as effective as they could be in checking, with precision, the depth of pupils' understanding. This makes it difficult for the school to identify and address any insecurities in pupils' learning. Consequently, the school is not able to ensure that pupils develop a deep body of knowledge across all subjects.

The school has high expectations of pupils' attendance and punctuality. It takes prompt and effective action, where pupils' absence or punctuality becomes a concern. This includes offering support to families. Attendance rates have improved year on year and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has significantly reduced.

The school has clear approaches to understanding and managing pupils' behaviour. Staff provide effective support to pupils who struggle to manage their emotions. In the early years, children understand and follow the embedded routines. Pupils typically behave well at school and incidents of poor behaviour have significantly reduced over time.

The school supports pupils' wider development well. Starting from the early years, pupils learn to manage their own personal needs independently. Pupils develop a mature understanding of how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. The school broadens pupils' experiences through enriching the curriculum. For example, pupils go on a range of trips and take part in sporting events with other schools.

There have been changes to the governing body since the last inspection. Governors are acutely aware of the school's areas for development. They hold the school to account for its work to improve in these areas. The school considers staff's well-being when making changes to the curriculum to ensure that these do not increase staff's workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Many of the school's subject curriculums are new and are still being developed to ensure that the essential knowledge is clearly and precisely defined. This makes it difficult for the school to ensure that pupils' knowledge develops securely in some of these subjects. The school should refine the curriculum, so that pupils develop the depth of knowledge they need across all subjects to be well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- In subjects where the essential knowledge is not clearly defined, teachers struggle to make effective activity choices to support pupils to deepen their knowledge. This hinders how well pupils learn the curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers choose activities that enable pupils to build on their knowledge consistently over time.
- In some subjects, the school's assessment systems are not as effective as they could be in checking how well pupils have learned the curriculum. This makes it difficult for

the school to evaluate the impact of the curriculums on pupils' learning. The school should ensure that assessment strategies in all subjects enable staff to identify how securely pupils are learning, so that there are no gaps in their knowledge and they are ready for the next stage of their learning.

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	112369
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10348113
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Allen Langford
Headteacher	Frances Winter
Website	www.stbedes.cumbria.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has experienced changes to its leadership since the previous inspection. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2023. The chair of governors has been in this role since September 2023.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic primary school and is part of the Diocese of Lancaster. Its last inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in June 2022. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place by June 2027.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school operates before- and after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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 headteacher, other leaders, governors and staff at the school. The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, history and English, including early reading. For each deep dive, inspectors 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. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- 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.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils at lunchtime and when moving around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils. Inspectors spoke to pupils and to staff to gather their views.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.

Inspection team

Liz Dayton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Garry White

Ofsted Inspector

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