

St Begh's Catholic Junior School

Coach Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 7TE

Inspection dates

17–18 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's focused and effective leadership has led to significant improvements across the school. Ably supported by the deputy headteacher, she has galvanised staff and reinvigorated their enthusiasm for teaching.
- Middle leaders share the same passion for teaching and learning as senior leaders. They lead their areas of responsibility effectively to ensure that improving standards are maintained.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge is underpinned by opportunities to improve their practice and share expertise with each other and with colleagues from other schools.
- Teachers use assessment information to plan well-constructed lessons that meet pupils' needs effectively, particularly for the most able.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that promotes pupils' curiosity in the world around them. The majority of older pupils develop skills and knowledge that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
- Some teachers do not always have high enough expectations about what younger pupils can achieve in subjects other than English and mathematics. This is particularly evident for middle-attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well. They make good progress from their starting points. Parents and carers speak highly of the support that their children receive from staff.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Strong relationships fostered by staff, combined with pupils' positive attitudes to learning, contribute effectively to the good progress that pupils make. Pupils flourish in an environment where they feel safe, valued and cared for.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Their knowledge and skills enable them to contribute effectively to the leadership of the school.
- Pupils' progress at the end of Year 6 in reading, mathematics and science is good, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, some older pupils have gaps in their spelling knowledge which hamper the progress that they make in their writing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the golden thread that weaves throughout all aspects of school life. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain because of the range of experiences that teachers provide. This broadens pupils' horizons to beyond their local community.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in subjects other than English and mathematics, particularly middle-attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4
 - teachers resolve gaps in older pupils' spelling to strengthen their written skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has led the school with dignity, drive and determination through a period of turmoil and staffing instability. The appointment of a new deputy headteacher and other key members of staff in 2017 strengthened the capacity of the leadership team. They have diligently tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and raised the expectations of pupils and staff. Consequently, all areas are now good, in direct comparison to the inadequate judgement at the previous inspection.
- Leaders have been supported well by a national leader for education (NLE). Their accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has led to a detailed action plan to address areas for improvement. This has ensured that leaders' actions have focused on the correct priorities. Leaders' close attention to strengthening the quality of teaching has been pivotal to improvement.
- Leaders' evaluation and careful analysis of information identified changes needed to the teaching of mathematics. Training was provided promptly for staff and has led to much stronger outcomes for current pupils, particularly when solving problems.
- Leaders for English have made effective changes to the teaching of reading. Training for staff has led to improvement in pupils' vocabulary knowledge, comprehension and inference skills. However, for some pupils, gaps in their spelling knowledge are hampering pupils' progress in writing.
- The leader for special educational needs works effectively with leaders from the local infant school to ensure that there is a smooth transition for pupils when they start in Year 3. Strong subject knowledge from the leader ensures that staff receive training to meet the needs of individual pupils, especially pupils who are supported by an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Leaders carefully track the progress pupils make to ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive carefully targeted support. Leaders work effectively with a range of other agencies, professionals and charities to provide additional guidance for families, and parents appreciate this. Funding is used effectively and pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are making strong progress from their individual starting points.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is tailored to the needs of the pupils effectively. Leaders ensure that pupils develop the subject-specific skills and knowledge to prepare them well for the next stage in their education. A range of opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects reflects potential careers in prestigious industries which are on the doorstep of the school. Leaders provide opportunities which bring the curriculum to life. For example, geography field trips to the local river enabled pupils to study geographical features at first hand and witness the impact of flooding on the surrounding area.
- Leaders provide a range of experiences which enrich pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, residential trips to Edinburgh provide pupils with the experience of city life, a stark contrast to their predominantly rural community. Pupils told inspectors that meditation during a visit to a local Buddhist temple in Eskdalemuir encouraged them to think about their own spiritual growth. Leaders have

high aspirations and pupils are prepared well to be responsible citizens in modern Britain.

- Leaders ensure that the funding for the most vulnerable pupils and their families is used effectively. Barriers to learning are swiftly identified. Skilled staff are deployed effectively to provide pupils with the support they need for their social and emotional well-being in the carefully designed 'Butterfly House' room. Progress for disadvantaged pupils is strong, because of the support they receive, which develops pupils' resilience well.
- Leaders use the additional funding for physical education and sport imaginatively. Pupils and staff benefit from the opportunity to hone their skills in a variety of sports. For example, they engage in orienteering challenges, visit the Forestry Commission's local visitor centre and develop skills in cricket and football. The trophies in the entrance area are a testament to pupils' improving success in local competitions.
- Parents who shared their views on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, or spoke to inspectors commented very positively about the school. They said that their children are safe and enjoy coming to school. They feel homework supports pupils' learning well and they enjoy the opportunity to work with their children on the research and design elements of the homework projects.

Governance of the school

- Governors acted swiftly to address the areas of improvement identified at the last inspection. They understand their responsibilities relating to safeguarding and fulfil them diligently. They have been supported well by an NLE, the local authority and the diocese. Governors show a strong determination to learn from their previous weaker aspects. Ongoing training ensures that governors are up to date with new initiatives. They have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for further improvement. Governors have the knowledge and skills that they need to hold leaders to account.
- Governors visit the school regularly to check the detailed information that they receive from leaders. They use their breadth of knowledge to review the impact of action plans. They are proud to be part of the school and share leaders' aspirations for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that the safety and welfare of all pupils and staff are at the heart of everything that they do. Checks are in place to ensure that adults in school are suitable to work with children; this includes volunteers who help in school.
- Training for staff ensures that they have a good understanding of how to identify potential signs of abuse. Staff fully understand the procedures in place for the protection of pupils. Any concerns are acted upon appropriately. All records relating to safeguarding are meticulously maintained. Weekly updates ensure that staff and governors remain vigilant.
- Leaders work with external agencies and charities effectively to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate help and guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is now consistently good because of bespoke training for staff to improve their knowledge and practice. Staff work collaboratively in a culture which promotes professional dialogue, support and challenge. They share good practice and expertise with colleagues from other schools. This has been particularly effective in raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in English and mathematics.
- A new systematic approach to the teaching of mathematics has had a particularly positive impact on improving pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables them to plan activities that meet pupils' needs well, including those of the most able pupils. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they enjoy the regular 'push it' challenges to solve mathematical problems.
- The teaching of reading is good. Changes to the way reading is taught have improved pupils' comprehension, inference and vocabulary skills considerably. Teachers use questions effectively to tease out the meaning of new vocabulary, which pupils use confidently in their reading. Pupils who struggle with their reading make good progress because of the effective support in place to help them.
- Teachers develop pupils' technical ability in writing well. Pupils write confidently for different audiences and for different purposes. Teachers plan activities that stir pupils' imaginations and creativity as writers. Progress in writing is improving and attainment is in line with the national average by the end of Year 6. However, for some older pupils, teachers have not tackled the gaps in their ability to spell accurately because of previously weak teaching. This hampers their ability to write at a higher standard.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to identify pupils who are struggling. Support staff receive training to enable them to help pupils catch up quickly. Staff skilfully ask questions to encourage pupils to expand on their ideas and explanations. Additional adults are deployed well to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This contributes positively to the progress that pupils make.
- Subjects other than English and mathematics are taught well, particularly STEM subjects for older pupils. Pupils study a range of subjects, including science, history and geography. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that pupils are developing subject-specific knowledge effectively. Teachers enrich the curriculum with activities and challenges. For example, 'the Nepal tomato challenge' saw pupils designing and building a method for transporting tomatoes from the mountains to the valley floor. However, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what younger pupils can achieve, particularly middle-attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- Homework challenges provide pupils with the opportunity to research subjects further. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they enjoyed finding out information at home and completing the art and design challenges with their parents.
- Teachers have developed a learning environment that promotes high aspirations for the future. Strong relationships and positive attitudes to learning fostered by staff contribute effectively to the progress pupils make. Displays celebrate pupils' achievements and support their learning effectively.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils. Positive relationships that are fostered within school are strong. There is a genuine warmth and respect between staff and pupils. Pupils feel safe and cared for. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said: 'You can trust the adults in school to listen to you and help you.'
- Pupils are extremely proud of their community. As part of the University of Central Lancashire's 'Connecting Communities' project, pupils take responsibility for their local environment. For example, pupils take part in litter-picking, which demonstrates their active role in the town. They engage with older people through visits and performances by the school choir. This demonstrates pupils' moral responsibility in caring for others.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They are confident that adults deal with situations before they escalate and that, if bullying did happen, it would be dealt with quickly. Pupils play harmoniously together. They are considerate of the feelings of others and understand how their behaviour affects others around them. Teachers develop pupils' respect, tolerance and understanding effectively to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Training for staff enables them to promote personal safety and healthy relationships very effectively. Leaders work with several national charities to develop pupils' personal strategies so that they know how to keep themselves safe in challenging situations, including online. For example, pupils understand why it is important not to share personal information on social media sites.
- Leaders exploit every opportunity to provide an exciting range of enrichment experiences for pupils to broaden their horizons and raise aspirations, especially for disadvantaged pupils. A variety of clubs and activities enrich the curriculum, including opportunities to play an instrument or work in the sensory garden. Visitors from the local community are an important part of the life of the school. For example, the local coastguard talks to pupils about the importance of keeping safe when living close to the coast. Staff organise residential trips and visits, which provide pupils with opportunities to experience life beyond their local community.
- Older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously as members of committees and role models for younger pupils. They understand the importance of making sure that the pupils feel welcome. Carefully thought-through activities during the year ensure that pupils settle quickly when they join the school in Year 3. Year 6 pupils are looking forward to moving on to the next stage in their education. Parents commented that they feel that their children are prepared well for the adventure ahead.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their calm and focused attitude to learning contributes well to the good progress that they make. Pupils are polite, confident and

well mannered. Their resilience to tackle challenging mathematical problems is preparing them well for the future.

- Pupils show respect for the opinions of others and empathy for those who may not be as fortunate as they are. Pupils work co-operatively together, supporting each other and discussing ways to solve problems.
- Staff work effectively with families, so that pupils who have been persistently absent from school now attend more regularly. This is having a positive impact on the progress that pupils make in their learning. Pupils value their education. Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016, the progress and attainment of Year 6 pupils was below the national average. Pupils were ill-prepared for the next stage in the education, particularly in reading and mathematics. However, due to decisive leadership and strong teaching, attainment and progress both improved and were above the national average in 2017. The provisional assessment information for 2018 indicates that this improvement has been maintained, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school's assessment information shows that current pupils have the skills and knowledge expected by the school, especially in reading and mathematics. Pupils are making good progress from their starting points on entry to Year 3.
- Changes to the way mathematics is taught have accelerated the progress that pupils make. Teachers encourage pupils to challenge themselves to think outside the box when solving complex problems. The proportion of pupils working at a higher standard is improving by the end of Year 6.
- Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make strong progress, in line with the school's expectations. An increasing proportion have skills and knowledge in line with pupils of a similar age nationally. Detailed assessment information and work in pupils' books show that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils' improving comprehension, inference and vocabulary knowledge are having a direct impact on the progress that they make in reading. Pupils who are struggling make good progress because of the effective strategies in place to support them. Pupils enjoy reading; they are becoming confident competent readers.
- Pupils' work is neatly presented and of good quality, particularly work in curriculum subjects other than English and mathematics for older pupils. However, younger pupils do not reach the same standards in other curriculum subjects as they do in English and mathematics.
- Pupils apply their mathematical and problem-solving skills well in science. Pupils apply their written skills effectively in other subjects, for example reports written following fieldwork on rivers. Although progress in writing is improving, the proportion of older pupils working at a greater depth is hampered by gaps in pupils' spelling.

School details

Unique reference number	112354
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10055808

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Stephen Scott
Headteacher	Catherine Mallard
Telephone number	01946696959
Website	http://www.stbeghs.co.uk
Email address	head@st-beghs.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2016

Information about this school

- St Begh's Catholic Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by an EHC plan is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined inspectors on some of these classroom visits.
- They observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at playtimes. Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of staff. Inspectors also met with three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority and spoke with a representative from the local diocese by phone.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, especially arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of school information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the 39 responses to Parent View, including 26 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses from staff. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

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