

Inspection of St John's Church of England Aided Primary School, Shildon

Jubilee Road, Shildon, County Durham DL4 2EQ

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone is welcome at this inclusive and friendly school. Leaders have continued to develop an environment where relationships between pupils and staff are kind and respectful. Staff take extremely good care of pupils and help them to learn well. Parents and carers commented to inspectors that staff go 'above and beyond' to make sure all children are happy and supported.

Pupils enjoy lessons. Older pupils discuss their ideas enthusiastically. Their concentration, when listening and discussing books such as Michael Morpurgo's 'Hereabout Hill', is impressive.

Staff model positive relationships and behaviour exceptionally well. Consequently, pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils consistently show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They know how to manage friendships so that everyone gets along most of the time. Pupils are knowledgeable about different types of bullying. They speak out against bullying on the rare occasion that it occurs. Staff are always there to sort out issues swiftly.

Leaders make sure that everyone participates in the wide range of activities on offer. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. For example, they enjoyed giving speeches in London at an event for the Worshipful Company of Iron Mongers, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils are proud of their participation in many sporting events, such as athletics at county level. They enjoy taking part in many events where they are invited to sing, for example at the Diocese of Durham Synod meeting.

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

Leaders recently revised the curriculum to ensure that it builds on pupils' prior learning. Important knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn are well sequenced. The curriculum is well taught in most subjects. In some subjects, such as history, leaders have not yet checked the effectiveness of the revised curriculum. This means that leaders do not know how well pupils are achieving in all subjects. For example, in history, some pupils in Year 4 remember knowledge from their current topic about the Roman Empire. However, they cannot remember the content from previous history topics. This means that pupils struggle to make connections between topics.

Leaders have prioritised reading. There is a consistent approach to phonics teaching. Assessment is effective in identifying gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. Pupils who need to catch up attend extra phonics sessions. However, some phonics lessons do not meet the needs of some of the weakest readers. These pupils do not have the phonic knowledge to access the same learning as their peers. Essential learning time is lost for these pupils.

Leaders have adopted a sequenced approach to reading from Year 2 to Year 6. Pupils read quality texts such as 'The Fib' by George Layton. They identify and explore new vocabulary. This is helping pupils to understand what they read.

In mathematics, teachers plan daily opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning. This is preparing pupils for future learning. Teachers present learning clearly. They make checks on pupils' understanding. This helps pupils to correct any misunderstandings. Some pupils attend extra mathematics lessons before school. This is helping pupils to close gaps in learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is of a high quality. Staff work well with external specialists to identify pupils' needs. Pupils attend pre-teach mathematics, reading and writing sessions during breakfast club. This helps to prepare them for future learning.

In the early years, staff establish clear routines and expectations. Leaders have designed a curriculum that connects with the whole-school curriculum. Teachers assess children's needs well. They plan extra sessions for children to improve their physical development. For example, children recently enjoyed learning to hula hoop with 'Hoop Stars'.

Provision for pupils' personal development in the school is exceptional. Leaders have designed a rich programme of experiences to develop all pupils' talents and interests. In Nursery, children take part in drumming lessons. Older pupils attend specialist music lessons to learn to play the glockenspiel. School sports clubs considerably strengthen the school's physical education (PE) curriculum. Pupils enjoy participating in competitions at county level for football and athletics.

Pupils improve their school and local community by raising money for various charities. Previous efforts have improved facilities for children in the town. Older pupils designed the new outdoor play area for everyone to enjoy at break times. Pupils talk about 'throwing kindness like confetti'. They give food to their neighbours in acts of kindness. Pupils enjoy celebrating cultural differences through assemblies and visitors. They understand the importance of equality. The curriculum for personal development contributes exceptionally to pupils' behaviour and attitudes.

Staff value the support they receive from leaders to manage their workload. Governors understand and carry out their roles effectively. However, they do not challenge leaders about the impact of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive training to keep them up to date so that they can identify and respond to safeguarding concerns. Staff are vigilant in reporting concerns. Leaders keep thorough records of all incidents. They involve external agencies swiftly to get appropriate support for pupils and their families.

Leaders and governors ensure that all necessary checks on staff are made before they start work at the school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. Leaders ensure there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, including history, leaders and governors do not have a comprehensive picture of how well the recently revised curriculum is being implemented. Leaders do not know where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. Some pupils struggle to remember and cannot make connections to previous learning. Leaders should check that the curriculum is implemented successfully and that teachers continue to receive training to help pupils build knowledge.
- Some pupils in the early stages of learning to read struggle to access the learning in phonics lessons because the activities are too hard for them. These pupils do not keep up with their peers. Leaders need to make sure that teachers build on all pupils' prior phonic knowledge in lessons.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114285
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10228956
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	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ms Patricia Pemberton
Headteacher	Mr Andrew D Farnell
Website	www.st-johnscofe.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.
- The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs on the school site for pupils who attend the school.
- The school is within the Diocese of Durham. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2018. The school's next inspection will be within eight years of the previous section 48 inspection.
- A new acting chair of the governing body has been appointed since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, including the school’s special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the acting chair, who joined the meeting on the telephone.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and the director of education for the Diocese of Newcastle and Durham.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the school’s single central record of recruitment checks and the procedures for safer recruitment of staff. The lead inspector held a meeting with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss actions taken following recorded concerns. Inspectors met with staff to check their understanding of safeguarding and the impact of safeguarding training.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. An inspector spoke to parents on both days of the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils to consider their views on safeguarding. There were no responses to Ofsted’s staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
John Downs	Ofsted Inspector

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