

# Inspection of St Mary's Catholic School

Benton Park Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE7 7PE

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Inspection dates: 12 and 13 September 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Sixth-form provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Emma Patterson. This school is part of 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, Anita Bath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Harrison. Ofsted has not previously inspected St Mary's Catholic School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Mary's Catholic School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St Mary's is an ambitious and nurturing school where pupils thrive. They are taught how to live out the school's Christian values in everything they do. This includes a continual focus on the importance of positive relationships, gratitude and service of others. Pupils are happy and safe in this exceptionally supportive atmosphere, where leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a high-quality and expansive curriculum.

The school sets extremely high expectations for pupils' conduct and achievement. Pupils rise to these expectations with pride. Pupils understand the rules in school and appreciate that staff apply them with fairness and consistency. Instances of low-level disruption and bullying are very rare. Pupils recognise the importance of excellent behaviour. They respect the differences between people and are mindful of the well-being of others. Staff actively promote these values through tutor time themes of the week such as unity and friendship.

Pupils make extremely good use of the many opportunities they have in the wider curriculum. This enhances their excellent academic outcomes. Pupils engage in an extensive range of clubs, trips and events, including the annual spiritual retreats. Sixth-form students commit to a minimum of one hour's school service every week. They act as mentors, become student leaders, run clubs and even help around the school site. Sixth-form students are proud to act as role models for younger pupils.

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

Leaders have designed a highly effective curriculum. They have carefully identified clear end points in each curriculum and topic area. They ensure that learning is sequenced and broken down so that pupils can reach the highly ambitious goals they set for pupils. Staff equip pupils with the ability to use sophisticated vocabulary to examine complex subject matter. As a result, the quality of pupils' discussion is exceptional. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, pupils used terms such as 'inherent' and 'atrocious' to explore the nature of evil in 'The Lord of the Flies'.

In lessons, teachers use a wide range of effective strategies and high-quality resources to help pupils to learn exceptionally well. They have excellent subject knowledge. They make sure pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), have extremely deep knowledge upon which to build their future learning. Curriculum planning is finely attuned to common misconceptions and teachers swiftly address them if they do occur. This enables pupils to make rapid and secure progress through the curriculum. For example, in a Year 13 maths lesson, students were able to give in-depth and precise answers to complex further maths problems because of the exceptional teaching they had received.

The school places a sharp focus on ensuring pupils can access the full curriculum. Reading is prioritised so that any pupils who have fallen behind can catch up with their peers. This programme of reading intervention is carried out by trained staff for

the pupils who need it the most. For pupils who simply need to build their reading confidence, a programme of peer mentoring is in place. Sixth-form mentors support their younger peers with reading aloud as part of their school service. Sixth-form students receive training for this important role and speak positively about the experience.

The school's high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes are modelled by all staff in the school. As a result, the school is a nurturing and warm environment. Pupils' commitment to their education is reflected in their high levels of attendance and punctuality.

School leaders enrich pupils' personal development through a carefully considered curriculum and range of planned activities. The school's approach to the taught curriculum means pupils have an excellent understanding of protected characteristics and fundamental British values. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, also know about age-appropriate risks and how to keep themselves safe in a range of different situations. Furthermore, the school ensures pupils engage with a variety of beliefs and ideas that are different from their own. Pupils are considerate when exploring these sensitive issues. This was evident in a religious education lesson when pupils were discussing ideas about stereotyping.

The school ensures pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They are committed to a strong careers education. Through this, pupils engage with a wide range of employers and education providers. All pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 undertake work experience.

Strong leadership at all levels, including governance, is underpinned by constant evaluation and self-reflection. Leaders are highly committed to continued and sustained improvement. St Mary's acts as a beacon for the multi-academy trust, supporting and developing other schools. Leaders relentlessly focus on the well-being and professional development of their staff. Staff are enthusiastic about this. They report positively on their career progression and workload. They feel that leaders listen carefully to their views.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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>	140081
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255632
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,444
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	271
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Harrison
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma Patterson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://stmarysnewcastle.co.uk/">http://stmarysnewcastle.co.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust. Its last section 48 inspection took place in January 2016.
- St Mary's Catholic School converted to become an academy in September 2013. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Catholic Comprehensive School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- A very small number of pupils access alternative provision. This provision includes two registered providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

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

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders over the course of the inspection. The lead inspector also held a meeting with the chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the board of trustees and one other trustee. They also met with the chair of the local governing committee and four other governors. They reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from trust board meetings.
- The lead inspector held a phone call with a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, mathematics, history and art. 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. Inspectors also visited a sample of lessons in other curriculum areas and spoke to additional subject leaders.
- An inspector met with the leader responsible for sixth form.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and visited a sample of lessons to look at the support given to pupils with SEND.
- To inspect the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and responsible deputy headteacher. They reviewed safeguarding records and the school's single central record. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding in school.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for personal development and visited tutor sessions.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and students formally throughout the inspection and spoke with them informally at social times and in lessons.
- A range of school documents were reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff gathered through Ofsted's questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Hannah Millett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Carl Sugden

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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