

# St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy

Lightwood Avenue, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY4 2AU

## Inspection dates

11–12 July 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The acting executive headteacher and directors are passionate about improving the opportunities for pupils in this school. Their commitment and determination have led to improved outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- The acting executive headteacher gives leaders appropriate support in taking the action required to meet pupils' needs.
- A broad curriculum develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Teaching is good. Teachers accurately identify what pupils can and cannot do. Very occasionally, some pupils are not fully challenged to deepen their understanding and reach higher standards.
- There is high-quality provision in mathematics. However, this is not yet the case in some aspects of the teaching of reading and writing.
- Questioning by teachers and teaching assistants is a strength throughout the school. Questions often help most pupils to think deeply.
- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils receive good support in overcoming their barriers to learning.
- Pupils are well behaved around school and in lessons. They value the work their teachers do and feel very much part of a school family.
- Pupils and parents agree that the school provides a safe and secure learning environment. Safeguarding procedures are effective.
- In most year groups, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have previously made slower progress than their peers. New interventions and assessments are now in place to improve the progress of this group of pupils.
- Children in the early years get off to a very good start. They make strong progress as a result of excellent teaching, strong leadership and effective support for the children and their families.
- Attendance is close to the national average. Leaders are supporting families to help some pupils attend more regularly.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and accelerate pupils' progress further by:
  - sharing the good practice seen in some classes in order to challenge the most able pupils so that more secure greater depth in their learning
  - ensuring that recent improvements to the teaching of reading and writing become embedded and allow pupils to reach their full potential.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi-Academy Trust provides valuable support to the school. Directors and leaders demonstrate a strong capacity to improve and are realising a vision for sustaining an ambitious culture at the school. High-quality in-school training and the sharing of good practice is having a positive impact on the quality of leadership at all levels and the further development of the school.
- The acting executive headteacher leads with confidence and determination. She is well supported by other leaders and together they form an ambitious and aspirational team. They have a clear view of the school's priorities for development and talk confidently about what they have already done and what they still need to improve. As a result, leaders and teachers are very committed and have created a supportive and nurturing learning environment.
- Staff morale is high and staff embrace opportunities to develop their practice. The performance management of staff is closely linked to the priorities of the school development plan. Staff told inspectors that leaders have created a 'culture of care, courtesy and concern'. Positive relationships between staff and leaders have supported the improvements in pupils' progress. Staff training is tailored to meet individual needs. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Senior leaders challenge teachers to demonstrate that all pupils are making at least adequate progress. If any pupil appears to be falling behind, teachers take swift action to fill in gaps of missing knowledge and skills. Directors, in turn, challenge senior leaders about the progress of pupils in each class. This is one reason why differences in the amount of progress made by groups of pupils are diminishing.
- Leaders ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to support pupils' academic and emotional needs. Part of the funding has been used to provide additional high-quality support from teaching assistants. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress.
- Leaders use the primary sport premium effectively to provide a sports coach and training for teachers, as well as to improve the development of sport. Training has enhanced teachers' skills and improved confidence in their ability to teach physical education. Additional sports clubs have encouraged pupils to participate in the wider curriculum and have given them the opportunity to take part in a wider variety of competitions.
- The school provides an interesting, wide-ranging and relevant curriculum, where pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced. The curriculum is well planned, based on the school's good knowledge of pupils' backgrounds, interests and academic and social needs. For example, pupils have had the opportunity to work with local journalists to produce articles for the local paper. Pupils are enabled to gain an understanding of equality, democracy and different religious beliefs. The school curriculum and values support the promotion of core British values. For example, pupils have a link with a school in India, have completed work on not judging others by stereotyping and have studied recent world elections.

- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is developing as the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has only been in post from March. Special educational needs funding is spent effectively. The coordinator is very reflective and is beginning to evaluate provision more rigorously. Along with strong partnerships with families, this enables him to have an insightful view of pupils' specific and often complex needs. The system of assessment allows leaders to accurately evaluate the step-by-step progress pupils make. Leaders know that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities need further support to help them to make the progress that they are capable of. They are now monitoring learning more regularly to review the impact of teaching and adapt it as required for this group of pupils.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective. The chief executive officer and the board of directors are jointly and actively involved in school improvement. They are committed to the ethos and values of the school and have a clear idea of the school's main priorities. They share responsibility for creating a secure governance structure for the school. Together, they provide a good balance of support, challenge and advice so that leaders are held to account and take the necessary actions to improve.
- Members of the board make regular visits to the school to speak with leaders and review learning. They ask pertinent questions and check the actions that leaders are taking. This helps them to gauge how much of a difference they are making to school improvement.
- Directors understand the pupils' progress information and the performance of the school compared to other schools nationally. They monitor the impact of the pupil premium, special educational needs and sports funding on pupils' outcomes.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders recognise that many children are vulnerable and they work closely with families and outside agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. There is a clear and timely system of referral. Leaders take appropriate steps to tackle issues or refer them on to external agencies when necessary.
- Records are kept securely and provide a clear trail of emerging concerns, follow-up actions and review procedures. The clarity and detail of record-keeping helps leaders to evaluate the impact of safeguarding and determine whether further support is needed.
- Pupils understand the importance of staying safe online and know the steps to take to make sure that they use the internet safely.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The effective programme of support and training for teachers has increased their confidence in planning appropriate work to match pupils' ages and abilities. Teachers

have strong subject knowledge, especially in mathematics. This allows them to use questioning to identify misconceptions and gaps in pupils' learning. Standards have risen in mathematics and continue to improve.

- In all classes, teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and form positive working relationships with them. Teaching assistants make significant contributions in lessons as they understand the needs of pupils. They are particularly effective in helping lower-attaining pupils to catch up. Pupils say that their teachers help them and they value the support they are given. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They are starting to develop resilience as learners and concentrate well in lessons as they are keen to succeed.
- In many classes, pupils are engaged because the learning is relevant. For example Year 6 pupils wrote a letter to Year 5 about being prepared for life as a Year 6 pupil. This helps to ensure that pupils remain on task and has a positive impact on the progress they make.
- The school's agreed policies for teaching and learning give teachers clear guidance on how to feed back to pupils about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. The impact of these school policies is evident because all teachers apply them rigorously and clearly. A consistent approach to the teaching of writing skills allows pupils to draft their work and enables them to articulate clearly how they can make improvements before producing a final version.
- As a result of improvements in the teaching of mathematics, pupils enjoy being mathematicians. Activities 'hook' pupils and garner their interest. Practical mathematics and investigation challenges really engage pupils in their learning. Pupils have to work hard to solve problems and are given rich opportunities to use their reasoning skills. The strong use of mathematical language is consistent across the school. Strong questioning in lessons supports learning and develops reasoning skills, drawing out high-quality explanations from pupils.
- Teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics gives pupils opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge. Tasks are well matched to the needs of pupils and provide challenge. Lessons are as interesting and engaging. Consequently, most pupils make similar progress in these subjects as they do in English and mathematics.
- Phonics is taught effectively and the teaching of reading is improving. This gives younger pupils a solid foundation upon which to develop their reading and spelling skills.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View and who spoke to inspectors agreed that teaching is good.
- Although there has been a significant improvement in the teaching of mathematics, the improvements in the teaching of reading and writing have not been as substantial.
- Pupils' presentation of work is improving. However, more could be done to model good handwriting and raise expectations to ensure that pupils form letters correctly and present their work neatly in some subjects.
- The majority of pupils are now progressing well. However, the most able pupils are occasionally not provided with challenging learning activities which deepen their knowledge and understanding in all year groups.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel valued and part of the school family. One pupil said, 'Teachers care for us and are there for us.' Other pupils stated that the school was 'amazing' and 'like my second home'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They say that incidents involving poor behaviour are rare but 'the teachers will deal with any issues'.
- Teachers help pupils to develop positive attitudes and so their self-confidence is improving, along with their resilience as learners. They are confident and self-assured and respond well to the expectations of staff. Pupils often show a high level of respect when listening to the views of their peers, yet are still confident enough to challenge each other appropriately in discussions. School assemblies reward characteristics such as perseverance as well as improved attendance.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They are confident that if they are worried about anything a member of staff will respond quickly and resolve the problem. Staff and a large majority of parents all agree that pupils are safe and well cared for. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.
- Staff actively and consistently model and promote the strong Christian values which underpin the work of the school. The school's values are at the heart of the curriculum. Consequently, pupils are taught to respect one another's opinions, culture and religion. The curriculum provides time for reflection on spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes.
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. For example, they can become head boy or head girl if elected by their peers.
- The needs of pupils are well met because leaders, teachers and support staff have a very good understanding of pupils' individual circumstances. They provide a range of effective support to individual families and pupils.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils who spoke to inspectors feel the same.
- Pupils like the new behaviour system and say that work is no longer disrupted as a result of poor behaviour. The few instances of off-task behaviour observed in lessons were dealt with quickly by staff using the school's behaviour policy.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use strategies effectively to reinforce positive behaviour. Leaders keep accurate records of all incidents of poor behaviour, of which there have been few over the course of the year.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils follow adults' instructions quickly and as a result classrooms and corridors are calm at all times.

- The overall attendance for the school is now close to the national average for primary schools. This is because of the improvement in the processes and proactive support in place to improve attendance for groups of pupils through targeted work with families.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' work across the school shows that they are making good progress.
- Pupils develop their early reading skills well. Standards in the Year 1 phonics check were above those seen nationally in 2016. Current Year 1 pupils have achieved similar standards.
- In Year 2 in 2016, the proportion of pupils working at the expected level in reading and mathematics, including disadvantaged pupils, was below the national average. Current pupils are now achieving well and the proportion of pupils who are achieving the expected standards in these subjects has improved significantly.
- Pupils make extremely good progress in mathematics across the school, which has resulted in a higher proportion than average reaching both the expected and higher levels. This is due to the emphasis that leaders place on the use of a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics.
- Progress in reading and writing for the pupils who reached the end of key stage 2 in 2016 was not as good as it was in mathematics. The school has quickly and successfully addressed this and leaders' monitoring shows that all groups of pupils are now making better progress in these subjects. However, in reading tasks there is less challenge for the most able in some year groups.
- Effective, targeted use of the pupil premium funding is enabling disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. As a result, any difference in progress between disadvantaged and other pupils is diminishing.
- Progress information for pupils currently in the school suggests that most pupils are making good or better progress from their individual starting points in a range of subjects. This was confirmed by the work seen by inspectors in pupils' exercise books across a wide range of subjects.
- Standards in writing are continuing to improve. Pupils' books clearly show how their writing has developed and improved over time. In all current year groups, inspectors could see improvements in the use of punctuation, grammar and spelling. Pupils' use of interesting vocabulary is also evident. Sometimes more attention to presentation needs to be given in some pupils' work.
- By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, they are academically and socially well prepared for secondary school. Transition arrangements between the school and secondary school are strong.
- The SENCo has recently introduced strategies to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress. Outcomes for these pupils show improvement since the new SENCo joined the school. This new support helps build pupils' confidence and improve their learning.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are now being challenged in their learning and make good progress in some year groups. Work for

current pupils indicates that a greater proportion are working towards attaining greater depth in their learning. However, more needs to be done to ensure that this challenge is evident in all year groups.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter Nursery and Reception with skills and abilities that are below the level of those typical for their age, especially in literacy, mathematics and communication. Adults have a good understanding of children’s needs and how they learn. A wide range of interesting learning activities is provided for children, enabling them to build concentration and a love of learning.
- Both the indoor and outdoor areas are of a high quality. They provide hands-on learning opportunities. Adults engage well with children and use careful questioning to probe and develop their knowledge and understanding. Children are curious and keen to learn and are able to stay focused on activities for prolonged periods of time. For example, cutting out pictures and writing about them sustained their attention until the task was completed. They are very proud of their work and are keen to read it to staff.
- The welfare needs of the children are well met. Leaders work effectively with parents and external organisations to ensure that children’s needs are met and that they are safe and very well cared for. Arrangements for safeguarding are effective and children learn in a safe environment. Children are supported appropriately in taking care of themselves. For example, they know the importance of eating healthy food.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years is good and as a result children rapidly develop their skills.
- Teaching is good because adults prepare learning activities which are well matched to children’s individual needs and which move their learning on quickly. As a result, they thoroughly enjoy their experiences. For example, children in Reception were very excited in their mathematics lesson as they had to pretend to phone a shop to order 3D shapes by describing properties of the shape they wanted. Within this lesson adults used questioning well to develop children’s understanding and reasoning, showing high expectations of the children’s learning and behaviour.
- As a result of good teaching, children make good progress and acquire the skills they need to be ready to start Year 1. The early years leader makes sure that all activities led by adults are well planned, interesting and challenging. For example, in one activity the teacher, working with children on counting in twos, asked children if they could count to 10 using all the legs on four-legged toys. This provided another rich opportunity for problem-solving and reasoning.
- Relationships between adults and children are very strong. Adults show genuine interest in the children they are working with. For example, while children were eating healthy snacks, a teaching assistant struck up a conversation with the children but also tested them on their phonics knowledge.
- Staff in the early years work hard to create effective partnerships with parents. For example, sessions run by staff to share good reading practice were well received. Sessions such as these help parents to support their children’s learning at home. This, in turn, helps staff to overcome some of the barriers children face in their learning.

- Children in Nursery are prepared well for their start in Reception. They enjoyed the opportunity to write to their new teacher with a picture of themselves. The Nursery staff had also provided a dressing-up box of school uniforms to prepare the children for the next stage in their education.
- For some groups, progress could be better still. Leaders have identified ways to improve outcomes for the most able children who speak English as an additional language. However, this is at an early stage of development and so has not yet been embedded in practice.

## School details

Unique reference number	141115
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10022792

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair of the Board	Mr Barry Leyland
Acting Executive Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Smith
Telephone number	01253 403232
Website	<a href="http://www.stcuthbertsacademy.co.uk">www.stcuthbertsacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@st-cuthbert.blackpool.sch.uk">admin@st-cuthbert.blackpool.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy opened in September 2014. It forms part of the Blessed Edward Bamber Trust. There are currently eight classes: a Nursery for 3- to 4-year-olds and classes for Reception to Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the

national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons across the school. These were observed jointly with the acting executive headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with the acting executive headteacher, senior leaders and teachers. Meetings were held with the chief executive officer and the academy trust board.
- Inspectors took account of 23 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also met with several parents at the start of the school day and took account of the school's latest parental survey.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its own work, school action plans, attendance records and safeguarding documentation.
- Pupils' books from all year groups and subjects were scrutinised jointly with leaders and inspectors heard pupils read. Inspectors also spoke formally and informally with pupils from all year groups to gain their views of the school.

## Inspection team

Simon Hunter, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Emma Gregory	Ofsted Inspector
Moira Atkins	Ofsted Inspector

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