

Inspection of a good school: Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School

Hawesmead Avenue, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5HB

Inspection dates: 4–5 February 2020

Outcome

Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, staff, parents and carers agree that this is a happy and caring school. The pupils I spoke with told me they enjoy school. They described their teachers as friendly, supportive and fun.

Staff teach pupils that they are special. Staff nurture, develop and celebrate pupils' talents. Staff provide a wide range of support to ensure that pupils achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In 2019 at the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than that of pupils nationally.

Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of experiences. For example, 'Mini Vinnies' plan and organise fundraising for charity. Pupils made 'boxes of hope' to send to disadvantaged children in Romania. Older pupils help younger pupils at lunchtime. Pupils develop as considerate and kind individuals. They learn to follow the school's Christian values.

Pupils behave very well. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. New pupils to school told me how welcoming other pupils are. Connie, the school's therapy dog, helps pupils to feel relaxed. Pupils said that bullying is rare. They are confident that staff listen to any concerns they have.

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

Leaders have planned a broad and interesting curriculum. This prepares pupils well for their next stage of education. This includes pupils with SEND.

Leaders have taken effective steps to improve curriculum plans. The plans that leaders have put in place reflect leaders' ambitions for pupils to achieve well. Staff are experts in the subjects they teach. They help pupils build a secure understanding by building on their previous learning. For example, in geography, pupils develop their mapping skills across different year groups. In mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils develop

accuracy in their written calculations. This starts in the early years, where children explore number in lots of different ways. From Nursery, they learn to recognise and write numbers. Teachers give pupils plenty of practice to develop their knowledge of key facts such as multiplication tables.

Staff plan interesting lessons. Pupils use a range of practical equipment which deepens their understanding in subjects including science. For example, children in Reception were absorbed in predicting and measuring how far a toy car travelled down a ramp. In Year 4, pupils, including those with SEND, designed, carried out and recorded investigations about conductors and insulators. Staff are refining the science plans so that pupils have more opportunities to revisit their learning. This is to help pupils remember more details about what they have learned.

Leaders have planned a curriculum which helps pupils develop a wide range of vocabulary in different subjects. Staff model the correct use of language, starting in the early years. In writing, pupils have plenty of practice to build their skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. They develop into competent writers who select the vocabulary they use to have a deliberate effect on the reader. Staff make frequent checks on pupils' writing progress. They use this information to identify any gaps pupils have in their learning. Sometimes staff do not use this information to plan writing activities which match pupils' skills and knowledge.

Leaders have ensured that reading lies at the heart of the school's curriculum. Pupils enjoy the wide range of books that their teachers share with them. The progress that pupils make in reading is well above pupils nationally by the end of Year 6. The proportion of pupils who met the Year 1 phonics screening check was well above the national average in 2019. Teachers make regular checks on how well pupils are learning. They make sure that teaching builds on the letters and sounds that pupils already know. Pupils falling behind in their reading are given a range of support to help them catch up. The phonics lead teacher has delivered support and training for staff. However, the approach to teaching phonics lacks consistency. Some pupils struggle with their early reading. They do not practise reading enough to develop fluency by the end of key stage 1.

Staff provide a variety of rich opportunities to develop pupils' confidence. For example, pupils planned and provided afternoon tea and entertainment at a local care home. Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting events and activities. They are proud to represent the school in festivals and competitions. Pupils told me how much they enjoy outdoor activities such as fell walking and ghyll scrambling.

Leaders make detailed plans for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Through assemblies and visits to the parish church, pupils have time for reflection and prayer. Staff plan a wide range of visits to museums and places of interest. Pupils learn about important world-wide events in weekly news assemblies. They learn to appreciate their local and wider community.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In the early years, children listen carefully to adults. They follow instructions quickly. In lessons, pupils are keen to do their best. They become resilient learners who learn from their mistakes.

Staff enjoy working at the school and feel valued by leaders. They appreciate the regular opportunities they have to develop their skills. For example, teachers work with staff from other schools to share their expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Checks are in place to ensure that adults in school are suitable to work with pupils. Leaders provide regular training for staff. This enables staff to know what to do when a pupil may be at risk. Leaders work closely with other professionals to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need quickly.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including online. Leaders provide useful safety information for parents. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They know they can speak to an adult in school if they are worried about anything.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The approach to teaching phonics lacks consistency. This slows the progress of some pupils. A small proportion of pupils start key stage 2 unable to read with fluency. They do not read regularly enough with an adult to develop their early reading skills. Leaders need to ensure that a consistent approach to teaching phonics is used. Younger pupils should have enough practice in their early reading to develop fluency.
- In writing, teachers do not always plan activities which build on pupils' previous learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers use their checks on pupils' learning to plan activities which help all pupils to develop their writing skills.
- In science, leaders are refining the coherence of curriculum plans. This is to help pupils deepen their knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that the revised curriculum plans help pupils know more and remember more of their learning in science.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School to be good on 21–22 April 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	112341
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10122091
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	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maureen Calnan
Headteacher	Sarah Tansey
Website	www.deangibson.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school had a section 48 inspection on 20 May 2016.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Reading, science and writing were considered as part of this inspection. Inspection activities included discussions with leaders, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their learning. In reading, I also observed members of staff listening to pupils read.
- I visited mathematics lessons in Reception and Year 2. I met with the subject leader for mathematics and scrutinised pupils' work.
- I met with the subject leader for geography and history. I scrutinised work in these subjects.
- I held a meeting with four governors.
- I met with the coordinator of the provision for pupils with SEND.
- I met with leaders to discuss pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- I checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single

central record. I met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in school.

- I met with a representative of the local authority and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese.
- I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority's virtual school.
- I met with parents at the school gate to seek their views. I also considered 53 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including free-text responses.
- I considered 10 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- During the inspection, I met with groups of pupils from key stages 1 and 2, including pupils with SEND, and observed lunchtime.
- I examined a range of documents. These included the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents, minutes of the governing body meetings and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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