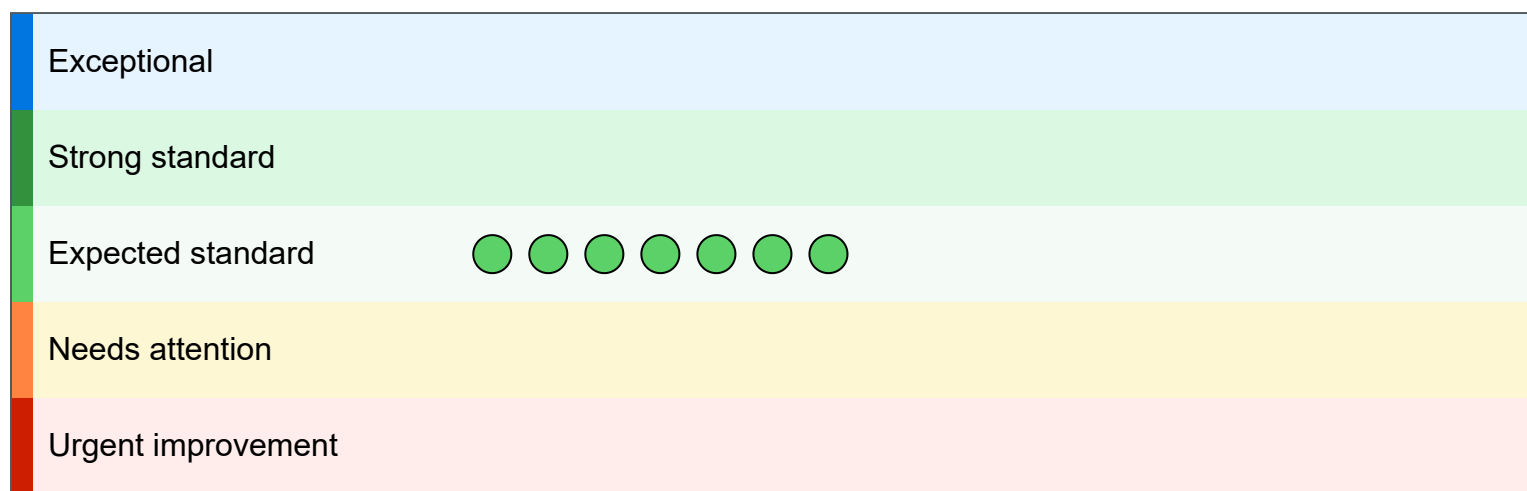


St Bede's Catholic Primary School

Address: Ridge Terrace, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 6EQ

Unique reference number (URN): 148283

Inspection report: 17 March 2026



✔ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils' outcomes in national assessments across all key stages show steady improvement since the last inspection. Year 1 phonics results have improved over time and are now close to the national average. Similarly, by the end of key stage 2 in 2025, the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is also close to the national average.

Pupils progress well across the curriculum from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make secure progress throughout the curriculum because staff match adaptations closely to their needs. Pupils gain early reading and mathematics knowledge well. Their early writing skills, particularly letter formation, are less well developed. However, overall, pupils are still prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders track the attendance of pupils closely and take effective action if attendance becomes a concern. Attendance has improved over time and is now well above national averages for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Very few pupils are persistently absent. The vast majority of pupils arrive on time and are keen to attend, socialise and learn. Pupils and their parents and carers value the education the school provides.

Pupils understand the school's high expectations for behaviour. Staff apply rewards and sanctions consistently. Alleged bullying or any discriminatory behaviour is investigated thoroughly and addressed swiftly. Pupils behave calmly and respectfully at the start of the day and move around school in an orderly way. They play cooperatively at breaktimes and behave well in the dining hall, chatting with friends and using cutlery correctly. In lessons, pupils behave well, and the exciting curriculum is beginning to develop their enthusiasm for learning. The new enhanced provision for pupils with SEND is already having a positive impact on the behaviour and learning of those who attend.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the curriculum. They check teaching in classrooms, review assessment information and talk regularly with staff about how to improve it further. The revised curriculum is well sequenced across subjects and year groups, so pupils build knowledge step by step. Reading is the foundation of the school's curriculum. Staff deliver the phonics programme expertly, and pupils move through the programme at pace to become fluent early readers. The reading curriculum continues systematically through key stages 1 and 2.

The mathematics curriculum is also well established. Staff help pupils use their multiplication tables confidently so they can solve more complex multiplication and division problems.

Leaders are introducing a new handwriting scheme to strengthen pupils' early writing skills and ensure these match their secure knowledge in reading and mathematics.

Leaders have created an effective professional learning community where staff develop their subject knowledge and classroom practice. Staff make thoughtful adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Targeted additional support helps pupils, especially older pupils, to fill gaps in their learning.

Early years

Expected standard 

The school has a clear focus on providing high-quality education to the children who attend the early years. Children enter the Nursery Year and Reception Year classes happily at the beginning of the school day. They understand and follow the established routines throughout the provision. Children stay engaged in very purposeful play over extended periods of time. Warm, caring relationships between staff and children create a strong foundation for learning. Communication between school and parents and carers is clear and positive.

Leaders prioritise the development of children's communication and language skills. Staff model language, guide children's thinking and extend their learning effectively. Their interactions with children, especially in the indoor learning environment, develop their early number, language and reading knowledge and skills well. The school's phonics scheme is delivered expertly by staff. Children apply their phonics knowledge confidently and correctly in early reading activities.

Their early writing skills are less well developed. Despite this, across the curriculum, children make effective progress from their individual starting points. They leave the early years more than ready to meet the demands of key stage 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders make sure all pupils are included fully in school life at St Bede's. They know pupils and their families well. Leaders identify the needs of vulnerable pupils quickly and make clear, inclusive decisions to support them. An example of this decision-making is the newly established enhanced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff receive high-quality training and make purposeful adaptations to teaching so pupils can take part fully in lessons alongside their peers. Leaders work closely with external professionals, including educational psychologists, to ensure pupils' needs are met well.

Staff ensure that individual education plans for pupils with SEND set accurate long-term targets and short, achievable steps that guide daily teaching. Positive relationships, detailed planning and regular checks on progress help pupils with SEND to learn well. Additional funding is used wisely to support disadvantaged pupils. They receive closely targeted support, such as extra early reading sessions and nurture group check-ins. Leaders ensure that pupils known, or previously known, to social care receive the help they need.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Since the previous inspection, the chair of the local governing body, several governors and the school's senior leadership team have changed. Currently, all of the school's senior leaders are acting in an interim or temporary role. Trustees and governors recognise that securing stable and long-term leadership is a priority.

Trustees, governors and senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further development. Leaders' strategic decisions, including targeted support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and additional reading sessions for disadvantaged pupils, are having a positive impact. This success is reflected by the year-on-year improvement in pupils' achievement in national tests.

Staff feel well supported and value leaders' commitment to their welfare and wellbeing. They value the school's wellbeing hub as a supportive space that contributes to the positive working environment. Teachers and support staff acknowledge the impact of the high-quality training they have received, which is based on educational research.

Trustees and governors have a clear understanding of their statutory duties and delegated responsibilities. They provide appropriate support and challenge, including their involvement in the development of the 2 new enhanced provisions for pupils with SEND.

Parents and carers are pleased with the progress the school has made since the last inspection. One, echoing the views of many, said, 'I have trust and confidence in the staff and the education they provide.'

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's well-planned approach to personal development and wellbeing begins in the early years. The inclusive approach is rooted in the school's values and its comprehensive personal, social and health education curriculum. This is supported by citizenship education, themed weeks and weekly updates for pupils and staff on current events in the news. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, and the youngest children understand the different types of families in modern Britain. Pupils learn how their bodies change as they grow and understand the importance of healthy eating. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. External professionals visit the school to teach pupils about local safety. For example, pupils received railway safety talks from visitors in preparation for the opening of Bedlington station.

Pupils reflect on their experiences in lessons and in assembly time. They have a deep knowledge of Christianity and a developing knowledge of Islam and Judaism. Their knowledge of other cultures is promoted well through planned events such as Black History Month and links with a village in Kenya. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. They experience democracy first hand when casting their votes for school councillors in an official polling booth. Educational visits to libraries, museums and theatres broaden their cultural knowledge.

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend a wide range of sporting, cultural and academic clubs. The multi-skills club, supported by the Newcastle United Foundation, is particularly popular. Leaders' strategic decision to move some clubs to lunchtime has increased participation, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils understand diversity and know that everyone is welcome at St Bede's.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to be part of the community of learning at St Bede's. They feel safe in school and behave well. Leaders address rare allegations of bullying immediately. Pupils show respect to each other, staff and visitors. They understand individual differences and treat everyone with tolerance. They attend happily, regularly and on time.

Children make a positive start to school life in the early years and settle in quickly. They join in stories, rhymes and songs with enthusiasm. Reading has very high priority throughout the school, and pupils and staff love to read together. Pupils talk about their favourite books and authors with knowledge and confidence. Reading is promoted by regular visits to the local library. Parents and carers appreciate the opportunities they have to be part of school life. For example, as part of World Book Day, they shared books and breakfast in school with their children.

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils. The school meets the needs of individual pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, increasingly well. Pupils are excited to learn the school's new curriculum, which is delivered by highly trained staff. The well-sequenced curriculum is enriched by regular educational visits and visitors. Pupils value the wide range of extra-curricular clubs on offer.

Pupils show positive attitudes to learning throughout the school. The standards they are reaching in reading, writing and mathematics continue to improve year-on-year. Pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next stage in education.

The school communicates with parents and carers well through face-to-face meetings, online apps, the termly 'St Bede's Bugle' magazine and half-termly newsletters. Parents appreciate leaders' visibility on the playground at the beginning and end of the school day. They are overwhelmingly positive about the changes in school since the last inspection.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the development of pupils' foundational knowledge in writing, such as pencil grip and letter formation, is given higher priority throughout the school.
- Leaders should regularly evaluate the impact of the school's 2 new enhanced provisions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, focusing on how these support pupils' behaviour and academic progress across the school.

- Leaders should ensure that children’s learning opportunities in the early years outdoor environment are as effective as those provided indoors, specifically in supporting children's language and vocabulary development.
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About this inspection

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 (CEO), Anita Bath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Harrison.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the interim executive headteacher, the seconded head of school, the interim assistant headteacher, the deputy diocesan director of education, the trust's deputy CEO, one trustee and 2 members of the local governing body during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection, for schools with a religious character, took place in July 2024. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place in 2029.

The school has undergone a significant change in senior leadership since the last inspection. An interim executive headteacher, a seconded head of school and an interim assistant headteacher are in post.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Interim executive headteacher: Laura Fallon

Lead inspector:

Belita Scott, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspectors:

Nichola Irving, Ofsted Inspector

Gemma Jeynes, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 17 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

199

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

240

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

16.11%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.52%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

7.04%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	47%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	66%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	46%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	30%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	72%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	53%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	76%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	76%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	33%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	30%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	57%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	71%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	29%	60%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	48%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	57%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	29%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	48%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	14%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference

between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	30%	68%	-37 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	67%	-34 pp
2022/23 (final)	0%	66%	-66 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	52%	80%	-27 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	80%	-24 pp
2022/23 (final)	29%	78%	-50 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	48%	78%	-30 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	78%	-21 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	78%	-22 pp
2022/23 (final)	29%	77%	-49 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	48%	80%	-32 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	79%	-24 pp
2022/23 (final)	14%	79%	-65 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	4.2%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.8%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	10.2%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	11.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	16.6%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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