

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114256
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378827
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2012
Lead inspector	John Paddick

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Laws
Headteacher	Barbara Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Paddick
Christine Cottam

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers and four trained assistants. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors held meetings with the vice-chair of the governing body, the headteacher, senior staff, and groups of pupils in Years 4 and 6. They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding policies, and the school's analysis of pupils' progress. They analysed 50 questionnaires from parents and carers, and others completed by staff and pupils. There were no available responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) when the inspection was planned.

Information about the school

St Cuthbert's is an average sized primary school. Pupils are predominately of White British heritage. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make up an above average and increasing proportion of the roll. The school meets the current floor standard. There is a breakfast club each morning which is managed by the governing body.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
 Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- St Cuthbert’s is a good school with a very positive ethos. It is a happy and welcoming school but it is not outstanding because most teaching is good, rather than outstanding.
- Achievement is good because children join the school in the Nursery class with skills that are well below those expected for their ages, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress to reach at least average attainment by the time they are ready to transfer to secondary education. Current attainment levels in Year 6 are above average in reading and average in mathematics and writing. They reflect the good progress that pupils have made since their overall below average attainment in Year 2.
- Good teaching enables most pupils in all year groups to make good progress. The effective tracking system soon picks up any pupils who are not reaching their potential and triggers extra help to enable them to catch up. Teaching is usually good and occasionally outstanding. However, its quality sometimes dips to satisfactory when the pace of learning slows compared to the good lessons or when the teacher does not cater fully for pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Very good care, guidance and support enable pupils to grow in confidence and increase their self-esteem. Pupils are polite, friendly and cooperate well with teachers and their assistants. A good curriculum with many outstanding features underpins pupils’ good academic progress and their very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher provides the school with good leadership. She has a strong and effective focus on the quality of education that the school offers and the progress that the pupils are making. Leadership of teaching and arrangements for performance management of staff are both good. Staff morale is excellent.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is always at least good and a greater proportion outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers move the most able pupils on to higher level writing and numerical work more quickly
 - increasing the sense of urgency in some lessons by setting pupils challenging time targets for the completion of activities
 - always providing suitable work for lower ability pupils which enables them to make good progress when they are being taught in mixed ability classes.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers are pleased with the progress their children are making. Evidence from the inspection supports these positive views. In Nursery and Reception classes, children quickly make rapid gains in skills and development as they close the gap between where they are and expected levels for their ages. Currently, children in reception are on track to join Year 1 with average attainment across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. This represents good achievement from starting points that are well below age-related expectations in nursery. During the inspection, children in reception were observed making rapid gains in beginning to learn to read and write, and in developing concentration and listening skills.

Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 means that pupils build securely upon the progress they have made in Nursery and Reception classes. Current attainment in Year 2 is average in writing and mathematics and above average in reading, representing good achievement. Pupils in Year 2 were observed by inspectors making very good progress in learning how to convert singular nouns into plurals and then creating written sentences to contain them. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the school's assessments are accurate and that most are working at expected levels for their ages. However, the amount of higher level writing and numerical work is slightly below average.

Attainment in Year 6 has been consistently above average in English and mathematics until last year when it dipped to below average. Current attainment in Year 6 is broadly average in mathematics and writing, and well above average in reading. This means that the dip of 2011 has been reversed and pupils have achieved well. They have made good progress overall and outstanding progress in reading. Almost all pupils in Year 6 are reading fluently at least at an average level for their age and half of the class are doing much better than that. Some are reading at levels normally expected of the average thirteen year old pupil. Pupils' written and experimental work in science is also above expectations for age. However, the proportion of pupils demonstrating higher level skills in writing and number is slightly below average. The overall improvement in attainment in Year 6 since 2011 means

that all groups of pupils, boys, girls, disabled pupils those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals have made good progress in their eight years in school and have eliminated the gap between their attainment and the national average.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers believe that teaching is good and inspection evidence supports this view. Teachers manage their classes well and provide pupils with a wide variety of activities that usually fully engages them. Consequently, the atmosphere for learning is usually good and frequently outstanding. Teachers know the pupils exceptionally well and select approaches that usually fully motivate them. In Nursery and Reception classes, teaching is consistently good and occasionally outstanding. Teachers and their assistants ensure that there is a rich variety of very productive adult-led activities and those chosen by the children themselves. Excellent preparation for an assembly on Mother's Day resulted in a moving experience for the parents and carers who were present. In Years 1 to 6, teachers use a good range of techniques and usually ensure that they maintain a good pace of learning. Occasionally, the pace dips to satisfactory rather than good when the teacher gives pupils too long to spend on one activity. Good planning frequently results in the class being split up into a number of groups so pupils can make good progress with work that is well-matched to their needs. However, there are occasions when whole-class lessons promote good progress for most pupils but a small number of lower ability pupils are left confused.

Good curriculum planning ensures that pupils progress well in their basic skills as they move through the school. A recent strong and effective emphasis on reading has raised attainment exceptionally quickly. Teachers and assistants are particularly successful in enabling pupils to use and develop their writing, numerical skills and competence with computers in the study of a wide range of topics, particularly science. However, there is still scope to move the most able pupils on to higher level work more quickly, particularly in the development of writing and numerical skills. Members of staff provide an outstanding range of experiences for the pupils outside lessons. Visits to Paris, Durham University, working with the Royal Shakespeare Company, links with India, Venezuela, France and Tanzania are just examples. These experiences, together with a strong emphasis on sporting activities, help to underpin pupils' overall outstanding personal development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. They have good relationships with the adults who work with them. In class, they display good concentration and cooperate well with their teachers and classroom assistants. At breaks and lunchtimes they act in a mature manner whether they are eating in the hall or playing outside. Bullying or poor behaviour are rare and when they do occur they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils have a good appreciation that bullying can take many different forms, such as inappropriate telephone texting or the teasing of other pupils. Most parents and carers and pupils express confidence in the school's systems for dealing with incidents of bullying but a few do express concerns. Inspectors observed pupils frequently and noted carefully the way that

they responded promptly to instructions from staff adults. They found that behaviour was consistently good and sometimes outstanding, especially in some lessons and in assembly.

The school provides pupils with a safe and supportive environment. Good supervision and site security ensure that pupils are not exposed to any undue risks. Pupils say that they enjoy school and recognise that they get a good deal in terms of the quality of lessons they receive and the many extra activities and visits that the school puts on for them. Most say that they feel safe in school and have a good understanding of the risks to which they may be exposed outside school, for example, internet use, roads and deep water. The school makes considerable efforts to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. The effectiveness of these measures is reflected in pupils' above average attendance. Even so, despite the school's best efforts, there are still instances of family holidays being taken in term time. These disrupt the education of a small number of pupils. The school uses the expertise of a number of agencies to provide effective support for pupils experiencing difficulties which could affect their progress.

Leadership and management

Good leadership and management at all levels mean that all members of staff share the headteacher's vision for the school and fully understand how they are expected to ensure that it is converted into reality. Self-evaluation is accurate and informs well-constructed development planning which has a high profile in the school's operation and development. Strategies involving the monitoring of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work have been particularly successful. Another strong feature is the very effective programme for the professional development of staff which involves sharing good practice from within the school and draws on professional help from outside. Rigorous monitoring of development plans, involving staff and governors, ensures that intended improvements actually materialise.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body play an effective role in monitoring the school's work on a first-hand basis and challenging if they think that more can be done. As a result of all of these efforts, the pupils benefit from a good and varied curriculum which is designed to lift pupils' attainment, promote good progress and underpins their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements. All aspects of pupils' safety have a high profile in the daily operation of the school and adults who have access to pupils are checked rigorously. A well-organised breakfast club provides pupils with a pleasant start to the school day. An effective commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in the success the school has in narrowing gaps in progress rates of different groups of pupils. There is no evidence of any discrimination. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. For example, the pace of learning is now much faster in Years 1 and 2, and pupils throughout the school are very clear about their targets and how to reach them. These successes, and the fact that pupils are making good progress, demonstrate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Crook DL15 9DN

Thank you for making the team so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. A particular 'thank you' goes to those of you who filled in the questionnaires or met with us to read aloud or talk about your school and the progress you are making. We were really impressed by your good behaviour and your good attitudes to work. We wish to congratulate the nursery and reception staff and children for producing such a superb and moving assembly on the Friday we were in school.

We found that your school is providing you with a good education. Teachers and classroom assistants care for you all exceptionally well and know exactly how much progress you are making. When you need extra help there is always someone there to provide it for you. St Cuthbert's is a happy and welcoming school which provides you with an excellent atmosphere for learning and good teaching. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school and that you recognise that your teachers and their assistants really care about you.

Your school can still improve further and we have asked the governing body, headteacher and staff to make three changes to enable you to learn even more quickly. These are to:

- move some of you on to harder work more quickly
- increase the pace of learning in some lessons so you get more done
- provide more suitable work for those of you who find some tasks rather too difficult.

You can help by continuing to behave well and work hard.

With every best wish for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Paddick
Lead inspector

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