

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108838
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	356436
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Waugh

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	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael McNulty
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Ward
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grindon Lane Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR4 8HP
Telephone number	0191 5536080
Fax number	0191 5536081
Email address	st.cuthberts.primary@schools.sunderland.gov.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Inspection number	356436

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by eight different teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff, a counsellor and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, looked at curriculum plans, scrutinised pupils' workbooks and learning journeys and analysed data about pupils' progress and considered the responses from the 114 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Overall attainment and the progress pupils are making in mathematics and science.
- The impact of the intervention groups on pupils' literacy skills, particularly those to improve spelling and knowledge of letters and sounds.
- The effectiveness of middle leaders on the work of the school.

Information about the school

The school is a slightly larger than average sized primary school and serves pupils from a wide catchment area. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly similar to the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The headteacher took up post in January 2011. The school has achieved Healthy School status.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school which is improving strongly. The family atmosphere and caring Christian ethos along with good quality care, guidance and support means that pupils' personal outcomes are good.

When children begin school their skills are broadly as expected for their age although they are lower in writing and mathematical development. They make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Throughout the rest of the school pupils make progress which is satisfactory overall but is good in some year groups. As a result of recent improvements pupils are reaching attainment which is broadly average in all subjects at the end of Year 6.

Teaching is satisfactory. Where the pace is brisk, the work challenging and well-matched to different ability levels, progress is good. Pupils are given enough time to practise what they have learned and teachers make frequent checks to ensure pupils understand what they are doing. In less successful lessons pupils are not clear about what they are learning or how to take the necessary steps to improve their work and achieve their objective.

Provision for the teaching of basic skills is satisfactory but pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise these skills across a range of different subjects. Partnerships with a range of different organisations provide good support for pupils' well-being and extremely varied enrichment opportunities. Provision for music is a particular strength and everyone learns to play a musical instrument.

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and in a short time has gained a detailed grasp of its strengths and weaknesses, many of which have begun to be addressed. The very supportive deputy headteacher has worked tirelessly to support the headteacher in her role and during her term as acting headteacher has made sure that the school was fully prepared to begin the process of driving improvement forward. Senior leaders are supported by middle leaders, whose roles are developing well. However, they have a less detailed grasp of what needs to be done to improve because they are not yet sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the work in their subjects or areas of responsibility. Plans to tackle weaknesses are currently too wide ranging and lack a clear enough focus to have a maximum impact on improving outcomes for pupils. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and provides a good level of support but recognises it needs to provide a higher level of challenge to help the school improve further.

Recent improvements in attainment at the end of Year 6 along with new systems to address weaknesses in assessment and teaching, which are beginning to have an impact, demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that progress accelerates and attainment rises by:
 - planning work so that it is clear what pupils will learn and ensuring they know the steps they need to take to meet the objective
 - giving pupils clearer indications of how to improve their work through feedback in lessons and marking
 - ensuring that all staff match work closely to the different needs of all individuals in lessons
 - ensuring that there is always challenge built into learning
 - increasing the pace of lessons and enabling all pupils to have more opportunities to practise the skills they are being taught.
- Strengthen leadership, management and governance by:
 - further developing the expertise of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating the impact of their work on the school in order to drive improvement
 - refining school improvement planning so it is precisely targeted on outcomes for pupils
 - ensuring the governing body regularly evaluates the work of the school and holds it to account more effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The vast majority of pupils respond well to the teaching they receive because relationships with staff are very good. In lessons, they have a positive attitude, are keen to learn and make satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress. Occasionally, pupils learn less well because they are not always given work which provides them with sufficient challenge. Pupils make mainly satisfactory progress when they are withdrawn from class and taught in small groups to boost their literacy skills, particularly to learn letters and sounds and to improve their spelling. However, sometimes their learning is limited when adults spend too long talking to them and do not allow enough time for them to work independently. Nevertheless, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Attainment in mathematics and science has risen and is now broadly average and progress is satisfactory. Pupils' enjoyment of school contributes to their satisfactory achievement. In one class, for instance, they were composing a 'happy poem' with a partner. Their excitement and enthusiasm was matched by the quality of the poems which they later performed for the rest of the class. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is helped by their participation in the wide range of artistic, cultural and sporting opportunities. They actively participate in worship and liturgies, showing great respect and thoughtfulness at these times. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and well mannered, acting in a considerate manner towards each other. Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe; older pupils teach younger

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

ones how to play games safely and they all learn first aid. They are aware of what they need to do to live healthily. For example, a Year 4 class conducted a pedometer trial to see how active they were and how much more energetic they could be. They have good opportunities to take responsibilities in school and are involved with the parish but their links with the broader community are less well developed. Pupils' basic skills are developed satisfactorily and their attendance is broadly average. Consequently, they are satisfactorily prepared for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

In the most effective lessons teachers and pupils are clear about what should be learned and there is enough time for all pupils to work independently on challenging and interesting tasks. Teachers make regular checks to ensure that pupils understand what they are learning. Teaching assistants provide support for pupils of all abilities and encourage independent learning with effective questioning and guidance. In specialist lessons, such as music, pupils benefit from the very good subject knowledge of the teachers which contributes to good progress. In lessons where pupils make slower progress they are not sufficiently clear about what they are meant to be learning. Teachers spend too long talking, so that there is not enough time for pupils to work on their own. Teaching assistants guide pupils too closely so they are not challenged

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

sufficiently, nor allowed to work independently. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but the quality of guidance provided in their added comments is of variable quality.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the curriculum and the school offers a very wide range of enrichment activities to advance pupils' sporting, cultural and artistic skills. The curriculum is broad and balanced and builds on what is learned year-by-year in order to develop pupils' basic skills. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practice these skills across different subjects or to see the links between different aspects of learning.

Parents and carers speak very highly of the good care, guidance and support the school provides. Pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable are particularly well supported by the school through provision such as the nurture group, 'dinosaur school' and the offering of counselling. Great care is taken to ensure that pupils with specific needs are fully included in the life of the school and in particular benefit from the range of enrichment activities on offer. There is a close partnership with organisations that support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The relationship with the local secondary schools is strong and transition into the next phase of education is organised well. Effective procedures are in place to check attendance and ensure that pupils come to school regularly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has quickly won the confidence of the entire staff team and governing body. All parties willingly endorse the need for further improvement and want to play their part in ensuring better outcomes for pupils. Middle leaders are taking an increasing responsibility for supporting staff to improve their teaching and identifying pupils who are not achieving as well as they could. However they are not yet fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and this limits their impact on school improvement. A good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses has meant that leaders have tried to respond to all weaknesses equally. This has resulted in plans which are not precisely enough focused so that it is not clear what the immediate priorities are which will bring about the most rapid improvements to pupils' achievement.

The governing body provides satisfactory management and fulfils its statutory duties. However, members of the governing body do not always hold the school to account in a systematic way in order that any shortcomings can be addressed promptly. Relationships with parents are positive and initiatives have been put in place to engage them more fully with the school and their children's learning. The partnerships that the school forges with

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

other organisations and agencies are one of its strengths and impact positively on the quality of provision and pupils' well-being. The school is cohesive and welcoming, with good links to the parish community. Plans are in place to extend fully its links to promote community cohesion further afield. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and meet current requirements. All groups of pupils have equal opportunities to develop their skills and talents. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. However, pupils do not yet make consistent progress in all lessons or activities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into Nursery because staff get to know the children and their parents and carers well. Adults create a calm and friendly atmosphere which encourages children to behave well and show care and concern for each other. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are fully met.

Adults provide good guidance when they are supporting children's learning as they play. They extend children's vocabulary and sensitively question and encourage children to develop their skills. Children enjoy the opportunities to explore and initiate their own learning. These opportunities offer good challenge in the outdoor learning area in particular. Learning in group times is sometimes less successful because groups tend to be too large and sessions last too long. As a result, it is difficult to cater for each child's needs and this results in children becoming restless and unable to focus on what is being taught.

From their individual starting points when they enter the Nursery, children make good progress in all areas of learning to reach standards which are broadly average and sometimes better when they enter Year 1.

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

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Staff, working together, continually strive for improvement and reflect on the quality of provision. They are beginning to make better use of data to support this reflection to bring about improvements. Partnerships with external agencies support children's learning effectively.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Of those who did, a very large majority were extremely positive about all aspects of the school. For example, they expressed high praise for the way their children enjoy school and are kept safe. They were also very positive about the way the school helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle. A very small minority felt that their child was not making enough progress at the school. Inspectors found that progress is uneven across the school. All children make at least satisfactory progress and it is good in some classes.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 114 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 246 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	58	41	36	4	4	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	76	67	35	31	1	1	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	67	59	42	37	1	1	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	52	46	40	6	5	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	70	61	36	32	4	4	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	51	48	42	2	2	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	49	51	45	3	3	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	60	53	50	44	0	0	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	47	53	46	1	1	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	42	55	48	7	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	38	59	52	4	4	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	58	51	47	41	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	55	44	39	3	3	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



30 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sunderland, SR4 8HP

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you. We were pleased to hear that you feel safe at school, know how to stay healthy and are helped to think carefully about the lives of other people and your own feelings. Here are some of the other things we found.

- Yours is a satisfactory school where you make satisfactory progress in your learning and most of you reach the expected standards by the time you are in Year 6.
- You make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- The care, guidance and support the school gives you are good.
- Your school works well with different partners to improve your education.

Part of our job is to identify how the school can be even better. We have asked your headteacher, members of the governing body and teachers to make the school more effective by doing the following things.

- Improve the quality of teaching overall to help you make better progress in your work and reach higher standards.
- Ensure all leaders, including members of the governing body, think carefully about what they want to improve in school so that it makes the biggest difference to the progress you make. We have also asked them to check carefully all the new things you are doing in school.

You can help your school improve even further by continuing to attend school regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Susan Waugh
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.