

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Berwick

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122309
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380448
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Chapman
Headteacher	Bernie Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in six lessons taught by three teachers, including joint lesson observations with the headteacher. In addition, they conducted short visits to several classes with the headteacher. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers, and made a telephone call to the school's external improvement partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. They also scrutinised the 37 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- How effective have strategies been to increase progress and raise attainment?
- How effectively do the curriculum and teaching enable all groups of pupils to make good progress?
- How effective have strategies been to raise attendance?

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority-ethnic backgrounds, including those of Roma/Gypsy heritage, is average and has increased significantly since the previous inspection. The percentage of those pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has achieved Activemark and Healthy School status. The Nursery class in the Early Years Foundation Stage caters for 28 children from across the town, not all of whom attend the Reception class, which admits 15 children.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader returned to school in September 2011 after a lengthy but unavoidable absence.

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. The headteacher has initiated appropriate strategies that have improved the teaching of mathematics and reversed a decline in attainment at the end of Year 4, which is now in line with the level expected of pupils for their age. Although pupils in the current Year 3 attained above average standards in the assessments for seven-year-old pupils and have made good progress from their starting points, the rates at which pupils make progress remain satisfactory and inconsistent across school. This is because, while there is some good teaching, teaching is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers make clear to pupils what they will learn and challenge them to improve. Teachers try to make learning fun and very skilfully employ probing questions to encourage pupils to explain and extend their thinking. However, in other lessons, teachers offer too much help, there are too many low-level activities, the pace of learning drops and progress slows. Information about pupils' skills and abilities is not used well enough to plan work that offers sufficient challenge for all pupils. Marking is done regularly but it does not always tell pupils how to improve their work. Pupils lack clear targets which would help them to take the next steps in their learning.

Most pupils enjoy school, especially the many enrichment activities. Pupils do not always see the links between subjects and topics are not used effectively to extend pupils' skills in writing and mathematics. Good partnerships with outside agencies are used effectively to support those pupils with a range of complex needs. However, partnerships that would extend pupils' creative and enterprise skills are under-developed. The school has good arrangements to engage with parents and carers, and, accordingly, the majority is extremely supportive of the school. However, a few families do not respond well enough to the school's robust procedures to improve attendance which is average.

All staff provide good care and support, which ensure that pupils are happy, feel safe and show a good awareness of how to stay fit and healthy. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school through the school council and they say that 'playground friends' help them play together and behave well. They show good spiritual, moral and social development and have a mature sense of right and wrong.

The governing body offers good support and challenge. The school is starting to improve as it has a more accurate view of the way ahead. Although strategies are not yet fully embedded a reverse in the decline in attainment can be seen and

attendance is steadily rising. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. It offers satisfactory value for money.

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?

- By the summer of 2013, ensure pupils make at least good progress and raise their attainment, by:
 - providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to solve problems and apply their skills in writing and mathematics in practical, exciting and investigative activities in subjects across the curriculum
 - using assessment information more effectively to ensure that work is matched accurately to the needs of individual pupils and lessons offer more pace and challenge
 - giving pupils advice on how to improve their work and clear next steps targets that will help them understand how to achieve the next level in their learning.

- Improve attendance by working closely with families to help them ensure their children come to school regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their work is satisfactory. Pupils have good attitudes, are extremely courteous, form positive relationships and show great keenness to do well in their work. They make good progress in lessons which are lively and capture their enthusiasm. This was seen when pupils worked together to discuss their reading books and wrote stories based on Christmas. They rise to a challenge and enjoy competition when playing games to test their understanding in mathematics. However, in lessons which are slow or fail to capture pupils' enthusiasm the pace of learning slows.

The skills and abilities with which children join the Early Years Foundation Stage are typically in line with those expected for their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress to attain standards which are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 4. Attainment is higher in reading than in writing and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, children of Gypsy/Roma heritage and those who speak English as an additional language are well cared for and supported in their learning and they make satisfactory progress.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils are aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise. This is reflected in their enthusiastic involvement in physical education and the fact that many pupils enjoy a healthy school meal. They care for one another well, have great respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel safe. Pupils are confident

that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community through the elected school council which discusses and enacts improvements in school, such as improving the playgrounds and developing the prayer garden. It meets regularly and plays a major role in helping pupils to behave well and feel safe. Pupils support a wide range of charities and participate in activities in the areas which celebrate their faith and improve the environment. Pupils have a have good understanding of the United Kingdom as a diverse, multicultural society because they celebrate other faiths and cultures alongside the school's Catholic ethos. For example, the travelling crib allows pupils to understand the meaning of Christmas.

Average attendance rates, average attainment and developing skills in teamwork and in information and communication technology ensure that pupils' development of workplace skills is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	3
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	
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons, teachers make learning fun, make it clear to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. They employ interactive whiteboard technology successfully to engage pupils, and plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, including research, games and using role play. In the best lessons teachers' questions are probing and ascertain what pupils already know and the progress they make. Positive features common to all lessons include strong relationships and teachers and teaching assistants interacting well with pupils to support them in their learning. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Too often, work is not well matched to the abilities of individual pupils and does not offer sufficient challenge or pace. Marking is done regularly and tells pupils how successful they have been in specific tasks. It is less well used to tell pupils how to improve their work or to give them clear targets which would help them to take the next steps in their learning.

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

The curriculum includes a clear structure to teaching the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. There are interesting enrichment activities, including visits to Paxton House and the holy island of Lindisfarne, which offer some opportunities for pupils to explore life in the past and in different environments. However, the curriculum is not planned with enough thought to the links between subjects so that pupils can see a clearer purpose for their activities. Opportunities to develop and apply important skills, including writing, problem solving and teamwork are not promoted fully across the curriculum. Visits to the local lifeboat station help to develop pupils' awareness of how to stay safe. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs which promote learning and enjoyment in sporting, arts and environmental activities.

This is a very caring school in which everyone looks out for each other and where all staff sensitively identify and support children and families who are vulnerable owing to their circumstances. There are successful strategies to support pupils who speak English as an additional language, those from the Gypsy/Roma community and those few pupils who find good behaviour difficult. The school works increasingly effectively with families to encourage attendance, which is average and improving. However, attendance remains average overall because a few families do not see the benefits of ensuring their children attend regularly. Well-established and effective practices, including involvement with parents and carers, lead to a happy start when children enter school and smooth transfers from class to class and to middle school.

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 is committed to ensuring pupils are happy and safe in school and to raising their attainment. She has worked closely with the senior teacher to introduce initiatives that have reversed a decline in attainment in writing and mathematics. Success can be seen in steadily rising attainment for pupils in Year 2. Other changes are in place, including better systems for tracking pupils' progress which is enabling staff to spot those needing help more promptly. Teaching is monitored with clearly-focused training opportunities being put in place to address identified needs in school. However, these changes have not as yet had a significant impact on improving progress or ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching. All staff have clear roles and responsibilities and contribute to curriculum development, decision-making and the school improvement plan. As a result staff support changes and all work well as a team.

Governance is good. The governing body supports the school well and has clear procedures to monitor learning and pupils' progress. Clearly directed by a well-informed chair of governors, it has a clear view of what needs to be done to challenge the school to raise standards.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust, meet government requirements and secure pupils' safety. It has close links with outside agencies to support the wide range of individual needs of pupils, although links to develop pupils' learning experiences are less well developed. While there is a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities, to ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided and to raising attainment, current rates of attainment and progress mean that the school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily.

The school is proud of its inclusive nature and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Careful planning ensures a strong sense of unity in the school and with the local community. There is a well-developed awareness of Britain as a diverse, multicultural society. The school is searching for ways to promote wider links with other countries. The school has introduced a range of effective initiatives to support parents' and carers' own learning and involve them more closely in their children's learning, including supporting learning at home and providing regular information about their children.

These are the grades for the 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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress from their starting point and leave Reception at the level expected for their age. There are signs of improvement and provision has been reinvigorated by the leader's return following an unavoidable absence. She has a clear understanding of how children learn and there is a strong team relationship with the highly skilled teaching assistants in the joint Nursery and Reception class. Priorities are clear and actions are already reaping improvement in children's progress.

Provision is now good and more children are making faster progress. Work is planned thoroughly and based on observations of children's learning. There are clear links between activities and learning goals, for example, to develop children's early writing skills. While information about children's skills and abilities offers a clear picture of attainment on entry, it is used less effectively to measure ongoing and overall progress. Effective and enjoyable interventions, by all adults, are successfully directed to develop skills in singing, counting, speaking and listening and linking

sounds and letters, so that children are rapidly extending their skills. Children improve their creative skills through construction, using information and communication technology and role play. There is a clear commitment to outdoor learning and children enjoy exercising on their scooters, developing their garden and exploring together.

Children develop independence and a good understanding of how to stay healthy, through accessing healthy snacks and drinks. Staff ensure that requirements regarding children’s safety are rigorously met. They encourage children to share, to take turns and to behave well. Extremely positive partnerships with parents and carers enable children to settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage classes. The learning journals, in particular, help parents and carers to understand how well their children are progressing.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Approximately one half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is above the response rate found nationally. The respondents strongly support the school and its leaders and how they meet their child’s needs, ensuring their child enjoys school, is healthy and safe. Inspectors endorse most of the parents’ and carers’ positive views but evidence indicates that some areas of provision and outcomes are satisfactory.

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 First School, Berwick 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 inspector received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 88 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	84	5	14	0	0	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	33	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	70	10	27	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	70	10	27	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	65	13	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	73	10	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	73	10	27	0	0	0	0
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)	24	65	12	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	73	9	24	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	70	9	24	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	57	14	38	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	68	12	32	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	84	6	16	0	0	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



8 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Berwick, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2EX

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school.

You go to a satisfactory school and your teachers know how to make it better. The team was impressed by your understanding of how to stay healthy, your politeness and the care you show for one another so that you feel safe and behave well. Your teachers look after you well and your parents and carers like the school very much. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and after-school clubs and visits. Your teachers have agreed with us that they should help your school to improve even more by:

- helping you reach higher standards at the end of Year 4, by providing more opportunities for you to apply your skills, answer probing questions, investigate together, solve problems and have more opportunities to write
- making sure that all your lessons have pace and challenge
- making sure that all the information that teachers have about how well you are doing is used to plan work that is at the right level for all of you
- making sure that you have clear advice about how to improve your work and clear targets which help you to reach the next level in your learning
- working with your parents and carers to make sure that more of you attend school more regularly.

You can help by continuing to do your best and attending regularly. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Potter
Lead inspector

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