

St Bega's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111697
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	378339
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	David Shearsmith

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	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Carroll
Headteacher	Michael Cooney
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2009
School address	Thorpe Street Hartlepool TS24 0DX
Telephone number	01429 267768
Fax number	01429 267768
Email address	admin.stbegas@school.hartlepool.gov.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

David Shearsmith
Patrick Hargreaves

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed seven teachers teaching 23 lessons, of which some were joint observations with senior leaders. They also paid short visits to other lessons to view the school's overall curriculum and observed short sessions on letters and sounds. In addition, inspectors made visits to assemblies and enrichment activities. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a national college school leader and school staff, including senior and middle managers. Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and evaluation records, development plans, safeguarding policies and a sample of teachers' assessments and planning. Inspectors analysed 72 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average and increasing. The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are typically below average, including those at school action plus. The number of pupils that are supported at school action is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are of minority ethnic heritages and there are none who speak English as an additional language. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two classes, one of which includes pupils from Year 1. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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 Bega's is a good school. Pupils make good progress in this school, which has a strong, family ethos. The school is not yet outstanding because pupils do not make the same progress in writing as they do in other subjects and provision for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not always promote learning opportunities for children in their basic skills.
- All pupils achieve well, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils are keen to learn and engage well in lessons. They enjoy their learning and the stimulating activities on offer. Reading is taught well throughout the school, so that pupils' progress is good overall.
- Teaching is consistently good with some examples of outstanding teaching. Pupils are clear about what they are going to learn. Questioning is used well to promote good progress and to assess and develop pupils' understanding. Lessons are stimulating and delivered at a good pace and there is a good climate for learning in the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good throughout the school. Pupils readily take on responsibility and are polite and helpful and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Almost all parents and carers agree with their children that behaviour is usually good and that bullying does not happen very often. Pupils enjoy school very much and this is reflected in attendance that is above average overall.
- The headteacher, very well supported by the deputy head, has made a positive difference to the school since the previous inspection. The senior leadership team has been instrumental in moving the school forward with clear feedback to staff about how to improve their practice. The leadership of teaching is good with a strong focus on improving progress through pupil progress meetings and with good systems in place to monitor and evaluate improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum
 - improving handwriting skills and presentation
 - improving the use of success criteria in writing lessons to accelerate pupils' progress
 - involving pupils' skills in assessing their own success in writing and then giving them time to improve.
- Improve outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving the level of challenge in activities when children are learning for themselves
 - providing more opportunities for children to develop their literacy and mathematical skills.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those typical for their age. They often have weaker literacy and calculation skills. In lessons, teaching effectively supports children's good progress due to the good relationships between staff and children in the Nursery and Reception /Year1 class. The provision for pupils indoors is good, but outdoor provision does not always promote children's skills in literacy and mathematics well enough.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Although levels of attainment in Year 2 have slightly declined over recent years, this has been due to more accurate assessment procedures and children's weaker literacy skills as they enter school. The pace of learning has increased and all pupils, including girls and boys and those known to be eligible for free school meals, are now making better progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. Teaching assistants generally provide good support across the school and as a result, pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make good, and sometimes better, progress.

This improvement in overall progress is beginning to have a positive impact in both Key Stages 1 and 2. By the time pupils reach year 6 standards are broadly average and improving, although writing remains a relatively weaker area. Improvements are also the result of better teaching and the good use of intervention strategies to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress. Pupils' attainment in the current Years 5 and 6 is broadly average and progress is good and sometimes better.

In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and they respond well to activities teachers set them. The teachings of phonics (letters and sounds) in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Pupils read confidently and enjoy talking about their books. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are broadly average in reading because the school has put in place a dedicated daily session to promote literacy and spelling across the school.

Quality of teaching

The school creates a very positive environment for learning with pupils being encouraged to learn through a stimulating curriculum which still has a focus on pupils' basic skills. Teachers and support staff generally work well in teams and ensure that all pupils make good progress. Some teaching assistants are particularly successful in meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs so that they make at least good progress. The school's timetable has been devised with short sessions to promote basic literacy skills in the morning, to maximise learning.

Learning often moves at a good pace and teachers are inventive in engaging pupils. For example, in a Years 3/4 lesson about India the teacher used a range of strategies that inspired pupils to learn and make good progress in their writing. Teachers effectively use questioning to clarify pupils' understanding as seen in Year 5/6 class when identifying two and three-dimensional shapes. The teacher very effectively assessed their prior learning and skilfully promoted their good progress by effective questioning and group work.

Where learning is less effective in some writing lessons, although pupils are clear what they have to learn, they are not always given sufficient guidance on how to be successful with a particular genre. This was the case in a Year 1/2 class where the success criteria were not made sufficiently clear to accelerate progress. Although progress is generally good, there are some missed opportunities across the school to accelerate progress through the effective use of success criteria.

Marking is generally good, however, pupils are not always given time to improve once they have been given guidance, particularly in writing, and some work is poorly presented. The curriculum is adapted well to meet pupils' needs, but there are insufficient opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to write at greater length. The school caters well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in lessons, as seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage where pupils explored a range of creative materials and were fascinated by the 'visiting alien'. Outdoor provision, however, does not always provide sufficient opportunities for children to improve their skills because child-initiated activities are not always structured well enough to provide sufficient challenge to extended learning.

Parents and carers agree that teaching is good. Many commented on the good progress their children were making in the school, for example, one parent wrote 'the school is a fantastic place for my daughter to learn and grow.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is typically good overall. In lessons, there is a positive climate for learning because pupils engage effectively in their learning and behave particularly well. The school is often complimented on the behaviour of pupils when they go out of school on educational visits. Pupils play happily together and support each other well, despite a lack of playtime equipment. Pupils are good at creating their own play. Most pupils think that behaviour is good the majority of the time. Although a minority of parents and carers say that a small number of pupils sometimes do not behave well, the vast majority of parents and carers feel that behaviour is good, and inspectors' findings reflect this. The school manages behaviour well both in and out of the classroom. Pupils are clear about how they should treat everyone in the school because of the good systems that supports behaviour management.

Pupils consider that bullying incidents are rare. Through regular assemblies and planned curriculum opportunities, pupils are given opportunities to discuss different types of bullying, including name-calling, cyber-bullying and racism. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of what they should do if they are being bullied and they said they are confident that any issues would be dealt with effectively. A minority of parents and carers did not feel that bullying is dealt with well. Inspection evidence indicates that good arrangements have been put in place to deal with any issues which arise.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and they also have a good understanding of how to keep safe and gauge risk. They know about how to stay safe in different situations and understand about e-safety and the need to stay safe on the internet. They are also aware of the dangers of living close to the sea and have a good understanding of water safety.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, well supported by a strong leadership team and a committed team of teachers, has been instrumental in raising standards in this caring family school. The whole staff are a strong team and they have been determined to improve outcomes for all pupils. Good professional development and support from their partner school has improved teaching and established a good climate for learning. The leadership of teaching and learning is good because monitoring and evaluation systems provide good feedback that has enabled teachers to improve. The school has good systems to support pupils' progress through meetings that hold staff to account. Good assessment systems and challenging targets have also been instrumental in improving the school's overall outcomes. Self-evaluation shows that the school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The school is focused on raising standards and is well placed to sustain improvement.

The planned curriculum provides a range of creative opportunities both in and out of school that meets pupils' needs well. It is based on raising standards and has been very effective in improving standards in reading and mathematics but less so in writing because there are insufficient opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum. Skills in handwriting and presentation have been identified recently as an area for improvement. However, initiatives to address these issues have not had insufficient time to have an impact on improving standards in writing. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is because pupils have a range of opportunities to understand other cultures as well as experiencing spiritual moments throughout their time in school. Pupils also relate well to each other due to the ethos of the school that promotes harmony and a family atmosphere.

The governing body provides good support and challenge to all school leaders and has helped to drive improvements. It meets its statutory responsibilities with regard to safeguarding and has good systems in place to ensure that the school is safe and secure. The governing body has developed effective committee structures to support improvements in the school and evaluate the impact of their decisions. There is no evidence of discrimination of any kind over a number of years. Good relationships across the school mean that all pupils are known as individuals and their needs addressed accordingly. As a result they all have an equal opportunity to succeed.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



4 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bega's RC Primary School, Hartlepool, TS24 0DX

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school and for completing the questionnaires. We really appreciated your help and particularly enjoyed talking to you. You told us that you really like school, the teachers care about you and lessons are often fun. You said you particularly enjoy art, music and physical education lessons. You try hard in lessons and look after each other in the playground. You are polite to adults and kind to each other as you move around the school. You behave well in and out of lessons and make a good contribution to improving the school.

Your school provides you with a good education. By the end of Year 6, your attainment is average and your progress is good because you are well taught. I have asked the school to help you even more by:

- making sure that you make better progress in writing, by improving your handwriting and presentation skills, involving you more in improving your own writing and by giving you more opportunities to write in other subjects
- improving outdoor opportunities for younger children to develop their basic skills, and providing them with challenging outdoor activities that help them learn for themselves.

You can help the school to improve further by continuing to concentrate hard in lessons and by suggesting ideas for improvements to the school playground that you talked to us about during the inspection.

Yours sincerely,

David Shearsmith
Lead Inspector

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