

# St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, New Seaham

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 114235          |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Durham          |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 378819          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 22–23 May 2012  |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Janette Corlett |

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

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                              |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided                      |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 5–11                                 |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 185                                  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | David Groark                         |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Michael McNichol                     |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 3 December 2008                      |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Mill Road<br>Seaham<br>SR7 0HW       |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0191 5813090                         |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 0191 5813390                         |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | seahamstcuthberts@durhamlearning.net |

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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Janette Corlett  
Wendy Richardson

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed seven teachers teaching 15 lessons or parts of lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made short visits to a number of support sessions led by trained assistants. Inspectors talked to groups of pupils in lessons, during breaks and the lunch hour and listened to a sample of pupils reading independently. Discussions were held with two members of the governing body and school staff including the headteacher, deputy headteachers and middle leaders. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents including the school self-evaluation statement, school development plan and safeguarding documents together with child protection and anti-bullying policies. Also, inspectors analysed 84 questionnaires from parents and carers and others completed by pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Lower than average proportions of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and/or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported with school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for 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

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall Effectiveness</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>3</b> |

## Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because the quality of teaching varies and this means that pupils do not make consistently good progress across all year groups. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average in English and slightly above average in mathematics. Progress is more rapid in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. While progress in Key Stage 1 is improving, it is only satisfactory and pupils do not reach high enough standards at the end of Year 2. Achievement is satisfactory overall.
- Teaching is satisfactory. It is stronger in mathematics than it is in English and this explains why progress is more rapid in this subject. Teachers' assessments of learning and progress are not always accurate and the targets set for future attainment are sometimes insufficiently challenging for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Most pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Their parents and carers confirm this. Attitudes to learning are good because teachers have high expectations of behaviour and lessons proceed in a calm, orderly manner. Pupils treat one another with respect and they behave sensibly as they move in and around the school.
- Management of teaching and performance is satisfactory. The systems and structures in place to enable school leaders at all levels to track pupils' progress accurately and to account effectively for the school's performance are unnecessarily complicated. As a result, teachers do not always have easily accessible information on pupils' individual stages of development and their expectations of progress are not always high enough. Nevertheless, improvements can be seen, especially in raising boys' attainment in writing and the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement especially in Key Stage 1 by ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better throughout the school by:
  - ensuring that teachers plan tasks and activities based on accurate prior assessment of learning which offer appropriate levels of challenge to the needs of pupils of all ability levels
  - harnessing and building on the good practice in teaching mathematics so that the quality of teaching in English improves to match this.
  
- Strengthen the impact of leaders and managers on achievement by:
  - developing a simplified and coordinated system for tracking pupils' progress which is easily accessible, gives a strategic overview of performance and supports teachers in planning for individual progress
  - holding teachers to account for pupils' progress through robust and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers are satisfied with their children's achievement. Inspection findings are that achievement is satisfactory overall, although it is good in a few years, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children enter the school with expected levels of skills and development except in relation to language and communication skills, which are lower. As a result of skilled teaching they make good progress especially in these weaker areas. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Careful arrangements to introduce children to school and engage their parents and carers in their learning mean that they settle swiftly and really enjoy school. Recent improvements to the indoor and outdoor learning environment provide increased opportunities for children to choose the direction of their own learning.

Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6, accelerating in Key Stage 2. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 is not as fast because expectations are not always high enough, particularly for more-able pupils. Assessment is sometimes not accurate enough to set suitably challenging targets. Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is average but improving. This is due to focused teaching and support which helps pupils to learn the links between letters and sounds. Pupils use this knowledge to break down new words. Progress increases in Years 3 to 6 in response to more challenging teaching. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average. It is improving especially in mathematics and reading which are currently slightly above average. Most pupils take real pleasure in reading both at home and in school. Recent developments to stimulate boys' engagement in writing across subjects are beginning to show an impact on raising attainment. Boys' attainment in writing is lower than that of girls, but the gap in attainment between boys' writing in school and that of boys nationally is narrowing rapidly.

Learning in lessons in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory, although the more-able pupils do not make enough progress because they occasionally spend too much time consolidating prior

learning when they are ready to move on and this limits their progress. This is not the case in Key Stage 2, where learning is more effective with an increase in the number of pupils reaching the highest possible standards in mathematics due to focused teaching on problem-solving and a range of stimulating activities.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as they move through the school with support from well-qualified teaching assistants.

## **Quality of teaching**

The great majority of parents and carers agree that teachers help pupils to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. They typically comment that teachers are approachable and always willing to discuss any concerns. Inspectors judge teaching to be satisfactory. It is not consistently good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make good and better progress. Teaching is effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage and adults support progress by encouraging the children to talk about their learning and taking every opportunity to extend their thinking. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers do not always make enough use of accurate prior assessment to secure a match of tasks and activities to pupils' needs. Where this is the case, progress is less rapid than it should be. In the best lessons, learning is brisk and pupils work quickly on interesting and engaging tasks. For example, in one lesson, the teacher engaged pupils' interest by linking the class topic of Ancient Egypt to a stimulating mathematical pyramid challenge which provided high levels of challenge for all abilities. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make increasingly effective use of skilful questioning to engage pupils and extend their thinking.

Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and give pupils clear direction on how to improve their work. Pupils point to examples where they have acted on suggestions to correct mistakes or modify future work. Older pupils frequently assess their own learning and progress and this helps them to develop as independent learners.

Relationships between adults and children are good. As a result, pupils are unafraid to ask questions and know that making mistakes is just a part of learning and improving. Teachers and support staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by encouraging them to listen to and value one another's viewpoint. Teachers develop this further throughout the wider curriculum by exploring other continents and cultures. Through established links with a school in Malawi, for example, pupils learn about the language, culture and traditions of people living in Africa.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The vast majority of pupils, parents and carers agree that children feel safe in school and behave well in lessons. Inspectors agree that behaviour is good. Teachers and support staff manage behaviour well and there is very rarely disruption in lessons due to poor behaviour. Pupils are eager to learn and respond positively to teachers' high expectations of behaviour. They are polite and courteous to visitors and the school has received many comments following visits, expressing appreciation of how well pupils behaved. This indicates that good behaviour is the norm in this school. Older pupils really enjoy supporting their younger friends and take their duties as playground 'buddies' very seriously. Additionally, every child entering the Reception Class is paired with a Year 6 pupil who helps them to settle into school and acts as a friend and guide.

Pupils say that there is no racism or bullying of any kind in school. Occasionally they fall out with one another, but they swiftly sort things out and know that they can turn to adults for help if necessary. Pupils are aware of the dangers of cyber-bullying and understand how to protect themselves from this both in and out of school. Attendance is average and improving.

## **Leadership and management**

Due to staff changes and long-term absences, some school leaders are relatively new to their roles and are just beginning to show a measurable impact on the school's performance. This gives the school satisfactory, rather than good, capacity to improve further. Systems to track pupils' progress are unnecessarily complicated. This means that senior leaders do not always have an accurate view of pupils' performance in every class. This reduces their effectiveness somewhat in holding teachers to account for pupils' progress. Similarly, while arrangements are in place for the performance management of teachers, objectives for improvement are not always sharply focused on measurable outcomes for pupils. Monitoring of teaching has led to improvements, although weaker aspects remain. Nevertheless, there is evidence of effective professional development. For example, recent initiatives driven by the literacy leader to improve the accuracy of assessment in writing are starting to raise boys' attainment in writing. Similarly, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the new leader has made significant improvements to the learning environment, particularly outdoors, and children make good progress in this Key Stage.

The impact of the curriculum on outcomes for pupils is satisfactory. Although the needs of pupils are not always fully met, recent changes to develop links between subjects are helping to raise standards in writing, particularly boys', and increase pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in the school to engage pupils and support their learning. For example, in one lesson pupils enjoyed developing their skills by designing websites with information about a range of African countries as part of a geography topic. Similarly, a range of interesting visits and visitors to the school provides a stimulating focus for topics. Pupils, parents and carers appreciate the range of after-school clubs, including sports and cookery clubs. Annual residential visits for pupils in Key Stage 2 enrich the curriculum and also support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Members of the governing body are well-informed, supportive and increasingly active within the school. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Equal opportunities are promoted satisfactorily. The school is proactive in promoting racial harmony. Pupils have a good understanding of their own local community and a developing awareness of the diverse nature of modern British society. Gaps in attainment are more evident in Key Stage 1 than other years, where the more-able pupils do not always make enough progress. Other gaps are reducing with more effective teaching.

## 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](http://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 up 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.**



24 May 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, New Seaham, Seaham, SR7 0HW**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you and observing some of your lessons. You told us how much you enjoy coming to school, where you feel safe in your large school family. We were particularly impressed with the way you behave so well, treating each other and the adults in school with courtesy and respect. It was lovely to see how the older pupils support the younger ones at breaks and lunchtimes and also how the trained playground buddies make sure that everyone has someone to play with and no-one feels left out.

We judged that your school is satisfactory and improving. Your achievement is satisfactory and you reach broadly average standards in English and slightly above average standards in mathematics by the time you leave the school. We have asked your headteacher, all the staff and members of the governing body to help you to achieve even more by making sure that the teaching in all your lessons is good or better. We have also asked them to make sure that your teachers accurately assess your work and that your school leaders simplify the systems they have in place to check the amount of progress you are making regularly. This will mean teachers have the best possible information to make sure you are always challenged to achieve as much as you can in lessons. It will also mean that if any of you are falling behind a little, teachers will be able to give you extra support quickly and make sure that you catch up.

You can help too, by continuing to look after one another, listening to the advice your teachers give you and working hard together in your school.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janette Corlett  
Lead Inspector

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