

St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	122308
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	384887
Inspection dates	26 - 27 June 2012
Lead inspector	Joy Frost HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The interim executive board
Chair	Joan Riley
Executive Headteacher	Con Todd
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2010
School address	Ridge Terrace Bedlington Northumberland NE22 6EQ
Telephone number	01670 822389
Fax number	01670 829285
Email address	kate.horn@northumberland.gov.uk

Age group	3 - 11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Joy Frost
Janette Corlett

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out at no notice. Inspectors observed eight teachers teaching 13 lessons. In addition, the inspection team observed two 'support lessons,' where additional help is provided by trained assistants. The inspectors met with three groups of pupils including hearing six pupils, from Years 1 and 2, read. They also spoke to parents and carers on the playground before school. The inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils' writing and mathematics books in three year groups with the executive headteacher and the Head of School. Meetings were held with members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and school staff, including senior and middle managers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding and equality documentation, bullying and accident logs, the curriculum overview and attendance and pupils' progress data.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school which expanded from a first school in September 2010 to include pupils up to Year 6. It is in a soft federation currently with St Benet Biscop Catholic Voluntary Aided High School on the same site. The headteacher of the high school is the executive headteacher of the primary school. The school is managed on a day-to-day basis by a Head of School in partnership with the executive headteacher. Governance is through the IEB supported by a shadow governing body.

The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average and the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. An increasing number of Gypsy/Roma heritage pupils are joining the school. .

When the school was inspected in June 2010, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Since June 2010, it has been monitored on a regular basis by Her Majesty's Inspectors. There has been extensive staff turbulence, including at executive headship, senior and middle leadership level, with many long- and short-term supply teachers. This is the first year that the school has had pupils in Year 6.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures. This is a satisfactory and improving school. It is not yet good because: not enough teaching is consistently good; not enough pupils make more than expected progress, especially in writing. There are inconsistencies in procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is rapidly improving in reading and mathematics and is satisfactory in writing. This is mainly due to inconsistencies in the quality of phonics (the sounds that letters make) teaching across the school. The previous underachievement of older pupils has been tackled and an increasing proportion of pupils makes good progress. The current Year 6 is on track to attain above the national average in national tests which constitutes very good progress this year. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well-supported and make similar progress to that of their peers.
- Teaching and learning improvements have been hampered by significant staff turbulence. Nevertheless, almost half of teaching observed was good with good pace and challenge for all ability groups and lessons which excite and motivate pupils to learn. In satisfactory lessons, planning is not always moving pupils' learning forward quickly enough, or taking enough account of what they already know.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents and carers spoken to on the playground agree. The behaviour of most pupils is good, but a few pupils exhibit challenging behaviour and, where behaviour management systems are not applied consistently there is some low-level disruption. Pupils say that there is little bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, but that when it does occur it is dealt with appropriately.

- The executive headteacher has a clear strategic vision for the school which is understood by staff, pupils, parents and carers. Together with the IEB, he has tackled staff underperformance rigorously. The school systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring the school's performance are effective; but there is a lack of rigour in focusing routine monitoring on the outcomes for pupils and in developing the skills of middle leaders further to drive improvement in their subject areas.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement and progress, especially in writing, by:
 - improving the consistency and quality of phonics teaching across the school
 - giving pupils more opportunities to respond to teachers' comments in their books and edit and improve their work
 - providing a wider range of reading materials for younger pupils in addition to scheme books
 - moderating the use of assessments between classes so that they are more accurate.
- Improve teaching and learning to good or better in all classes, by:
 - sharing the good practice evident within the school more widely
 - using assessment data to plan lessons which take account of what pupils already know and can do
 - increasing the pace and challenge in all lessons so that pupils move their learning on at a quicker pace.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - improving the skills of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating attainment and progress in their subjects
 - focusing the monitoring in lesson observations more closely on the impact of teaching on pupils' outcomes
 - ensuring that new systems adopted to improve pupils' progress are embedded across the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children generally enter the school with skills which are typically-expected for three-year-olds but this can vary year-on-year. They settle well into school routines in the Nursery and make good progress in acquiring the skills and knowledge they need to become good learners. When they enter Year 1, their attainment is in line with national expectations in most areas of learning. As they move through the school, the majority of pupils makes improving progress in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is weaker because the teaching of phonics is inconsistent. For some pupils in Key Stage 2, gaps in their knowledge of phonics are not being

plugged rapidly enough to ensure they have the tools to become confident writers. The school's data show that the achievement of the current Year 6 cohort will be satisfactory in English and mathematics.

By the age of six, pupils can use their knowledge of sounds to decode unfamiliar words and have developed a bank of words that they can sight read; but this knowledge is not being transferred to their writing because of the inconsistencies in practice. Pupils read regularly in school and reading records show that they also read frequently at home. Parents and carers confirmed that pupils now bring books home more regularly but these are limited to 'scheme' books which limit pupils' ability to develop their skills more widely. By the end of Year 6, pupils are developing a love of reading. Recently-purchased reading materials to engage boys in reading have been effective in improving their progress. Pupils also have access to children's newspapers and good guided reading sessions which enable them to practise their reading throughout the week. Pupils' communication skills prepare them adequately for the next phase in learning.

Pupils' progress in mathematics is accelerating across the school because they have more opportunities to carry out activities which require them to solve problems, reason and discuss their work with each other. Practical activities in mathematics were observed being taught in all year groups and this consolidated pupils' understanding of previous learning. In some lessons, however, the lesson planned was not the next step for some pupil groups and consequently their learning slowed. Pupils are also not given enough opportunities to practise their quick recall of number facts or use their knowledge to work out calculations mentally.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory and improving progress due to well-focused intervention programmes taught by highly-skilled teaching assistants. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable also make progress in line with that of their peers.

Quality of teaching

The teaching observed varied in quality. Some good and better teaching was observed where pupils were engaged fully for the whole session, and activities offered an appropriate level of challenge for all pupil groups. In these lessons, behaviour is exemplary and relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. These exemplary relationships aid pupils' learning, because high expectations are communicated at the beginning of the lesson and pupils know exactly what they need to do. In a mathematics lesson for the oldest pupils, the teacher related the learning to pupils' every-day experiences of shopping to help them understand the need for problem-solving and reasoning in every-day life. The pace of learning was rapid, with the teacher constantly checking the learning of every pupil throughout the lesson. The independent activities offered different challenges to all ability levels and pupils used reasoning skills very effectively to work out a 'puzzle'; to identify which was the most relevant information and calculate the answer, all within rigorous timescales. Consequently, all pupils made rapid progress and the teaching developed pupils' personal, moral and social skills well.

In satisfactory lessons, pupils spend too much time on one activity, or they all carry out the same activity and teachers do not check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson. Consequently, they make satisfactory progress rather than good progress because some pupils could move their learning forward at a quicker rate.

Marking has improved and teachers make 'next step' comments in pupils' writing books. However, few pupils have opportunities to respond to these comments and edit and improve their work. The marking in mathematics books is inconsistent and in some books teachers are not correcting common mistakes quickly enough; nor do they use this information to plan the next lesson. Teachers assess pupils learning regularly and most assessments are accurate; but evidence in books showed some inconsistencies between grades awarded in different classes.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive satisfactory support and intervention. They regularly receive small group work or one-to-one tuition and effective support in lessons to enable them to work towards their targets.

There have been too few opportunities for satisfactory teachers to observe and learn from the good teaching that is evident in the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that behaviour has improved and that they feel safe in school. They are aware that a minority of pupils exhibits challenging behaviour. They think that the school's behaviour management systems are effective; but that they are not used consistently, especially by new or supply staff. Pupils are knowledgeable about all forms of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying relating to race, sexual orientation, belief and religion. Pupils in the school are aware of the dangers associated with the Internet and cyber-bullying. The school is hosting a coffee morning this week to make parents and carers more aware of the dangers of bullying and to involve them fully in this aspect of the school's work.

Most pupils have good attitudes to learning and form good relationships with adults and each other. In lessons, they respond well to teachers' instructions and can work co-operatively and, when given the opportunity, enthusiastically discuss their work with the teacher and each other. They readily take on extra responsibilities and respond well to the rewards they receive for good behaviour and effort. Pupils who have complex learning or behavioural needs receive focused intervention and support where necessary. There were examples of some low-level disruption in lessons where the pace of the lesson slowed, but this did not disrupt the learning for the majority of pupils.

Minor disagreements occur in the playground. Pupils said that they sometimes get bored in the playground because there is little for them to do when they do not have access to the school playing field which is zoned into different areas, but this is mainly for football.

Attendance is currently average but is affected by the attendance of some pupils who take extended leave. The school has worked tirelessly with these parents and carers

and the attendance of some has improved significantly.

Leadership and management

The planned developments and improvements set out by senior leaders have been hampered by the constant turnover of staff. Nevertheless, the new executive headteacher and Head of School have formed a firm partnership where roles and responsibilities are understood clearly. The executive headteacher is a real presence in the school; he is known to parents and carers and can regularly be found in the playground. The soft federation and partnership with the local high school have been beneficial to the primary school. Access to the 'learning links' extended services provision has been instrumental in engaging more parents and carers in the life of the school and this initiative is rapidly improving their attendance at school events.

The executive headteacher has developed a clear and effective system to track pupils' progress across the school and into the high school. This is understood by all staff and it tracks the performance of different pupil groups rigorously across the school. This information is used effectively to plan intervention and support for any pupils who may be falling behind and it is also linked to pupils' attendance so that the school can identify pupils whose attendance is affecting their attainment and successful measures are taken to work with parents and carers.

Senior leaders have carried out a programme of support and professional development for subject leaders. This has been effective in improving their performance and understanding of the use of data and skills when monitoring subject areas. However, more work needs to be done to continue to develop these skills; for all leaders to ensure that all new systems are embedded fully across the school and that monitoring focuses more precisely on the impact of these actions on outcomes for pupils. Consequently, the school has a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvements.

The IEB has monitored the work of the school rigorously while also developing the skills of the shadow governing body. Procedures to safeguard staff and pupils meet current government requirements and the IEB has been rigorous in monitoring the school's work to eliminate harassment and promote equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The curriculum underpins pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily. There are improving links between different curriculum areas and opportunities to learn about the similarities and differences between different cultures and develop a better understanding of diversity and their place in a multicultural society. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught regularly through weekly opportunities to access good learning in the ICT suite at the high school. However, the curriculum is not underpinned sufficiently by the use ICT as a tool to aid learning in lessons.

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 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.



28 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Bedlington, NE22 6EQ

As you know I have been visiting your school regularly for some time to check how well you were all progressing with your learning. I am pleased to tell you that your school is now satisfactory and no longer requires special measures.

I would like to thank all of the pupils who willingly gave up their time to come and talk to me and tell me about the improvements that your teachers were making. I would especially like to thank the pupils who have taken the time to come and read with me. Here are some of the things I found out about your school.

- Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. You told me that occasionally, when the 'traffic light' systems are not used consistently, there is low-level disruption in some of your lessons and some pupils can behave in a silly way in lessons and on the playground.
- I think that most of you now make the expected progress in your learning and an improving proportion is making good progress. You still make more progress in mathematics and reading because teaching in these subjects is better.

I have asked your teachers to make some improvements so that you make as much progress in writing as you do in other lessons. I would especially like the teachers to make sure that you all receive good daily phonics lessons so that those pupils in Key Stage 2 who missed out on these can plug gaps in their knowledge. I have also asked teachers to let you respond to the comments in your writing books so that you can edit and improve your work before moving on to the next piece. Some of the younger pupils do not have a wide enough range of reading materials and I would like the school to improve this.

I want all of your lessons to be as good as the best ones I observed so I have asked teachers to use the assessments they make about your learning to plan lessons which move your learning forward more quickly.

Your views were valuable in helping me come to decisions about your school. You can continue to improve your school by coming to school every day, on time and listening closely to your teachers in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector

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