

St Cuthbert's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Parkfield Road, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham, TS18 3SY

Inspection dates 18–19 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. It has improved since the last inspection and it is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and reach standards that are above average.
- Pupils are proud of their school and behave well. They are welcoming and courteous to each other and to visitors.
- Pupils say they feel safe. Attendance at school has improved and lateness is rare.
- The curriculum is enriched by many interesting and worthwhile activities so that pupils have a wide range of experiences.
- The effective leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body, has led to better teaching and faster progress by pupils. Leaders, at all levels, know how well the school is doing. This is a good school that continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The younger pupils do not make as much progress in their early reading as they could.
- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching across the school. Some lessons do not proceed quickly enough and pupils do not have the chance to work independently of their teacher often enough.
- Some pupils do not respond to suggestions from teachers about how to improve their work. This means that these pupils are not always clear about the progress they have made.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes and this consisted of 20 observations of lessons or part lessons. The headteacher conducted one joint observation and the deputy headteacher carried out two joint observations with inspectors. Inspectors also visited the breakfast club.
- Meetings were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and to parents as they brought their children into school in the morning. They took account of nine responses from the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors heard pupils read and checked the school's assessment of pupils' progress in reading.
- The school's tracking system showing pupils' progress in English and mathematics was checked by inspectors.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation evidence, the school's improvement plan and records of the monitoring of teaching.

Inspection team

Peter Eeva, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Shearsmith

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding provided for children in local authority care, those from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average and has increased in recent years.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs has recently risen and is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is increasing.
- An above average number of children join the school later than the usual starting point or leave before the end of Year 6.
- The school has the Eco Green Flag award, Fair Trade status and the Silver Inclusion Mark.
- There is a breakfast club which is administered by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Boost progress in early reading by developing a more systematic approach for teaching the sounds that letters make.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure that all lessons go at a brisk pace and include opportunities for pupils to learn on their own
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to respond to marking and make improvements to their work
 - giving pupils the skills and information to assess their own learning and the learning of others.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from Year 1 to Year 4 and even faster progress in Year 5 and Year 6 where some teaching is outstanding. Pupils leave Year 6 with standards that, over the last three years, have been above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children enter the Nursery class with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typical for their age and well below in literacy and numeracy. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress in most areas of learning, although the approach to the teaching of early reading is not as well organised as it could be and, while all make steady progress, it could be better.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average by the end of Key Stage 1. Some pupils do not make as much progress in their early reading as they could because they do not pick up letter sounds fast enough.
- Writing is often imaginative because the school has enriched the curriculum with special 'wow' events that give pupils much to write about. In mathematics, pupils are confident at solving problems and applying their skills in different situations.
- The more-able pupils make good progress and the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress is above average.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the good support they receive from experienced staff.
- Pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium funding also make good progress because of the additional support they receive. For example, the school has successfully used some of this funding to take action to improve attendance so that pupils do not miss lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and there is some exemplary teaching. All staff are determined to become even better and are beginning to share good practice with each other.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage children enjoy their learning and develop good learning habits. During the inspection children were very excited to discover Santa's footprints in the classroom and to have the chance to make reindeer food. Nevertheless, while the school gives the teaching of early reading a high profile, the teaching of letter sounds is not as well organised as it could be.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and question pupils successfully. They use their responses to plan future activities that are set at the correct level for the individual pupil. They make sure that work for the more-able pupils is hard enough.
- Good relationships and behaviour throughout the school lead to pupils learning in a calm and orderly atmosphere. The best learning occurs when lessons go at a brisk pace that sustains pupils' interest. Just occasionally, the pace of learning is not quick enough and, when this happens, some pupils start to lose concentration.
- Marking is frequent and teachers usually make suggestions about how pupils can improve their work. However, pupils do not always have the chance to make these improvements. In a few lessons, pupils cannot decide how good their learning has been because they do not have the chance to assess their own work. Pupils rely on their teacher to tell them how well they are doing and do not have checklists or prompts that let them identify what they need to do.
- Teachers guide pupils through a series of well-planned tasks and, in the best lessons, pupils are able to make choices and to work independently, but this does not always happen. As a result, they rely too much on their teacher and their progress in investigation and following their own line of enquiry is not as rapid as it could be.

- Teachers make lessons interesting and sustain pupils' enthusiasm for learning. They link other subjects to topics and always include a really exciting event. In Year 5, for example, the Greek week resulted in some high quality writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are very positive about their learning. They describe how their teachers make learning interesting and they appreciate the educational visits and broad range of extra-curricular activities.
- Behaviour is typically good and in lessons most pupils behave well, but occasionally, when the pace of learning slows, a few pupils get restless when their interest wanes.
- Pupils and parents say bullying is rare. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take because the school takes steps to teach pupils about it, and what to do if it happens. For example, just recently, there was an anti-bullying week called Friendship Week. There have been no recent exclusions and no recorded racist incidents.
- Pupils are clear about how to keep safe and say they feel very safe in the school. They have a sound understanding about how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Pupils are very polite and welcoming and describe their school as being 'like a big family where everyone cares for and about each other'. A small group of Year 4 pupils made sure that an inspector had good company during lunchtime in the dining hall. Older pupils act as buddies, prefects and play leaders to help care for younger pupils.
- Behaviour at the well supervised breakfast club is good.
- Attendance has improved and persistent absence has decreased as a result of the relentless work of the school and, in particular, by the parent support advisor who has done much to engage the parents of those pupils who, in the past, have not attended school regularly enough. Pupils now want to come to school to learn.

The leadership and management are good

- Very strong leadership by a determined headteacher, supported by an increasingly experienced leadership group and dedicated governing body, has resulted in the school improving from satisfactory to good.
- Leaders at all levels are determined to improve teaching and regularly check what is happening in classrooms. Teachers are advised how to make their teaching better, although variations between classes remain. This information leads to training linked to the needs of individuals and the school. Staff are increasingly sharing their expertise with each other and with other local primary schools.
- Staff are set targets based on the quality of their teaching and the progress pupils make in their classes. This is managed rigorously and only the staff who meet their targets are considered for additional pay.
- Pupils' progress is checked regularly and those who fall behind are given the help they need to catch up. The needs of those supported through pupil premium funding are spotted promptly and the help provided has a positive impact on their progress. Staff have an accurate awareness of pupils' progress and are expected to know the reasons why any are not making enough progress. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment have increased since the last inspection.
- The support from the local authority has helped the school improve since its last inspection.
- The school carries out a thorough evaluation of its performance and produces an action plan to show how priorities will be tackled. These accurately match the school's needs and effective leadership ensures they have a clear impact on progress and teaching. This has led to an improved, and improving, school with good capacity to move forward.
- The curriculum is rich and imaginative and pupils are given stimulating experiences to help

improve their writing.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively. All staff promote equality of opportunity and all pupils have equal access to the rich extra-curricular activities such as the gardening club.
- Safeguarding arrangements and child protection policies and practice meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very well informed about all aspects of the school and is ambitious for the achievement of all pupils. They review data about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and ask probing questions if they think attainment could be better. They ensure that finances are well managed. They know that the spending of pupil premium funding benefits the pupils because they are aware of its impact on pupils' progress. Governors receive a range of training provided by the local authority.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111683
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	401197

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	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Dowson
Headteacher	Julia Douglass
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2010
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