

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

Mill Road, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 0HW

**Inspection dates** 14–15 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Over time pupils' achievement and progress has varied across year groups, subjects and between different groups.
- Not enough teaching over time has been good or better because teachers have not always used the information about how well pupils are achieving to plan lessons and set work that help pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Teachers do not always ask questions that probe pupils' understanding. This means that some pupils struggle to cope and others, particularly the most able, sometimes work at tasks that are too easy for them.
- Pupils have had too few opportunities to work things out for themselves and carry out tasks that interest them.

### The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are improving rapidly because of effective leadership and management.
- The acting headteacher provides strong and decisive leadership.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and they take pride in their work.
- Pupils feel safe in school.
- Governors have contributed significantly to the school's rapid improvement. As well as supporting the school, they provide rigorous challenge and hold school leaders to account.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, and subject leaders for English, mathematics, physical education, behaviour and safety, the teacher responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). They also had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the local authority adviser for Durham County Council and the consultant headteacher supporting the school, brokered through the National College for School Leadership.
- Inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by seven teachers. They also listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6. They carried out drop in sessions in a number of phonic sessions and observed a number of small support groups linked to literacy.
- The lead inspector carried out two joint lesson observations of teaching and learning with the acting headteacher and observed her giving feedback to staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: recent records of governing body meetings; documents relating to school improvement and self-evaluation; monitoring reports from senior leaders and the local authority; the work in pupils' books across the school; the school's website and documents and policies relating to safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took account of the 38 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 14 staff responses.

## Inspection team

David Wilson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sonya Williamson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's RC Primary School is slightly smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. As a consequence, virtually all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium funding is provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has retired and the deputy headteacher has taken on the role of acting headteacher. The school has been supported by the headteacher of another local school. This additional provision was brokered by National College of School Leadership and has focused on building capacity of school leadership to drive school improvement and raise standards for all pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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

- Improve all teaching to good or better and increase the rate of pupils' progress and raise their attainment even further by:
  - ensuring all lessons build upon what pupils already know, understand and can do
  - ensuring all pupils have more opportunity to think more deeply about their work and to use and apply their understanding to solve problems
  - ensuring the most able pupils are better able to infer meaning from what they read
  - checking how well pupils are achieving in lessons to make sure that they are working at tasks that help them make the best possible progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because over time, whilst pupils have made at least expected progress, too few have made better than expected progress given their starting points.
- Typically, children enter the Reception class with skills expected for their age. A few children have weaker skills in communication, language and literacy. They make expected progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and start Year 1 at the expected level.
- In Key Stage 1, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with national averages and is improving as a result of good support and improvements being made in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' achievement has risen since the previous inspection and is now improving rapidly. In 2012-13 more pupils than previously reached the expected Level 4 and higher Level 5 in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2. A few pupils gained Level 6 in mathematics. Additional initiatives, including a regular homework club for older pupils and the use of selected groups for additional learning support, have been effective in improving pupils' progress. However, there is still some work to be done to ensure consistently rapid progress in all year groups. Overall, lesson observations and analysis of pupils work indicate a picture of achievement that is improving quickly.
- The most able pupils make very good progress in mathematics but only expected progress in reading. This is because they are not always helped to infer deeper meaning of what they have read. However, in other lessons, such as in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, the level of challenge was just right for the most able pupils. They responded enthusiastically and were fully involved in their learning. This helps to explain why results at the end of Key Stage 2 show the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in mathematics is above the national average.
- Pupils of different ages say they enjoy reading and the most able readers read with fluency and expression. One pupil stating 'they like to read in bed at night even when they are not supposed to'. They talk in an informed way about their favourite authors and the types of stories they like to read. Those at an early stage of reading are using their phonics skills to build and blend both new and familiar words. The Year 1 phonics reading check indicates that pupils' phonic skills are above that seen nationally. Additional support programmes and the use of small teaching groups linked to pupils' needs have ensured that all groups of pupils make good progress in their use of letters and sounds.
- The attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs is at least in line with that expected. Pupils supported by school action make expected progress given their starting points, and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs make good progress. Where progress is most rapid, support has been successfully developed to help pupils make up lost ground.
- The few pupils supported by the pupil premium funding make similar progress to their classmates. By the end of Key Stage 2, the attainment of those known to be eligible for free school meals is at least in line with the national average. The school has made good use of its additional funding through establishing specific programmes of work, equipment and additional adult support to help these pupils improve quickly.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time requires improvement because not all pupils are making good progress.
- The quality of teaching observed during the inspection indicated that it is improving well and as a result, pupils' achievement is improving as is their rate of progress. However, not all pupils

have had the benefit of consistently good teaching over time, which is reflected in their inconsistent learning and progress.

- Teachers plan lessons, have very good relationships with pupils and mark work regularly. However, not all lessons build successfully upon what pupils already know, understand and can do. As a result, not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Planning to meet the needs of different ability groups is variable. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop their own interests and think reflectively about their work. The most able pupils have too few opportunities to reflect on what they read to deepen their understanding across a range of subjects.
- In some lessons, the assessment of pupils' progress and the use of questioning to find out what they know and understand are less effective. As a result, the pace of learning for some pupils is sometimes too slow or too fast and this prevents them from achieving as well as they should. There is though other evidence from lesson observations, the school's records of checks made on the quality of teaching and the analysis of pupils' work that indicate that this relative weakness in teaching has become increasingly less prevalent.
- Pupils made the best progress when they were motivated by interesting and challenging activities. For example, in a good Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils enjoyed working in pairs using data to solve problems involving percentages and fractions.
- The deployment of teaching assistants to support the learning of those pupils supported at school action or with a statement of special educational needs is mostly effective. In most lessons, they are well prepared through detailed plans that helped them to identify the key resources to use, questions to ask and how to record pupils' progress.
- Marking and feedback to pupils are inconsistent. Whilst there are some good examples of marking in English and mathematics this does not always extend to other subjects. The marking and assessment of pupils work in Years 2, 5 and 6 is consistently good. This has contributed to the excellent quality of presentation in pupils' workbooks.
- The teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement because activities do not always help children to achieve as well as they might. For example, children in the Reception class had to wait too long to have their turn as part of a group activity. As a result, some pupils lost interest, were distracted and their progress slowed. Other evidence, however, shows that overall teaching is improving in this key stage as a result of effective management.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are motivated and eager to learn. The vast majority apply themselves to the tasks they are given. Occasionally, a few pupils lose concentration when tasks do not fully interest them.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school at break times and lunchtimes is good. This reflects the successful whole-school approach to the management of behaviour. Pupils have a very clear understanding of what the expectations of behaviour are and comply with them.
- Whilst a few parents felt the school did not manage behaviour well enough, the overwhelming majority of parents believe it is well managed. Those responding to school surveys and those spoken to by inspectors were very positive about pupils' behaviour. They supported the view that their children felt safe in school and appreciated the care and support their children receive.
- Most pupils demonstrate good consideration and respect for each other and adults. When talking to inspectors, it is clear pupils are proud of their personal achievements and of the school. This includes both academic and sporting success, as well as the acknowledgement they receive for good attendance.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and cooperate well together particularly when encouraged to work together in groups or pairs. For example, in a good Reception class lesson children working in the outdoor area showed exceptional levels of cooperation and independence when building a train from large construction blocks. Children negotiated with each other to collect materials,

arrange seating, and check that the correct number of seats were put in place and that everyone had a job to do in completing the task.

- Pupils told inspectors they enjoy coming to school and their attendance is consistently above average.
- The school keeps pupils safe and secure.
- Pupils state they feel safe in school. They are aware of how to stay safe in school and in the community. Staff and governors work successfully to ensure that the school is a safe environment in which to be. Younger pupils were well aware that the school visitor badge meant the person was allowed to be in school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the various forms of bullying. They state there are a few occasions when people fall out and name-calling takes place, but are clear that adults listen to their concerns and deal with matters quickly and fairly. Pupils have many opportunities to take on roles of responsibilities within school and they take these very seriously. Older pupils look after younger pupils and they enjoy being responsible for them on school outings and visits to church. Younger pupils say they enjoy working with their older 'reading buddies'. The school council is elected democratically and is given opportunities to promote ideas within the school.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher work in close partnership and provide strong and purposeful leadership. Their success in communicating high expectations and the drive to raise standards is demonstrated in the strong team spirit that is in place across the school.
- Since the last inspection, all those with leadership and management roles have rapidly developed their skills and responded to the challenge of whole-school improvement. As a result, they are contributing strongly to the school's ongoing improvements.
- Actions to improve the quality of teaching have been very effective. The high quality professional development provided by working in partnership with one other school and the willingness of staff to take on and implement new ideas, is ensuring that the quality of teaching is continually improving.
- Senior leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching across the school and take effective action through the management of staff performance to address areas of weakness. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and this has had a positive impact on raising standards. Challenging targets are set for all staff. Salary awards are not made unless staff members achieve their targets.
- Leaders and managers use a wide range of information to check on pupil progress. Most middle leaders use the school's data on pupil achievement to measure the effect of their actions on pupils' progress although some are not as rigorous at doing this.
- Whilst the school has focused on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, it also provides many opportunities for pupils to find out about science, art, history and geography. For example, workbooks in Year 6 record exciting and interesting accounts of what it might feel like to have been an 'evacuee' in the Second World War. The curriculum also provides many opportunities that develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils talk excitedly about the range of visits they experience, including places of local interest. Leaders, however, realise that still more needs to be done to further raise pupils' achievement in English.
- The Primary School Sport funding has been invested in developing the use of specialist coaching. This enables a variety of sports coaches to come into school and work with teachers in lessons and improve the staff skills over time. The funding is also being used to increase the sporting resources in the school and to extend the range of sporting activities and after-school clubs.
- Statutory requirements related to safeguarding are met.
- The local authority provides good support and challenge. It rigorously challenged the school to make improvements quickly. Links with an outstanding partnership school have been highly

effective in improving the quality of leadership and management. As the school's own effective capacity for leadership and management have improved, the intensive support has been withdrawn. The local authority continues to carry out rigorous checks on the achievement and progress of pupils and the impact of the school's action to improve the quality of learning. Staff and governors have benefitted from specific training programmes that have helped to develop their skills and expertise.

- Staff and the governing body have very positive links with pupils, parents and families. As a result, the vast majority of parents are supportive of the school.

- **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have played a key role in driving forward the school's current improvement. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed. Governors have a range of skills and expertise to hold the school's leaders to account. Through governing body meetings, committee meetings, analysing school performance data and visits to the school, governors have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They ensure that checks on teaching and pupils' achievement determine whether teachers have any increases in salary. They also evaluate the impact of the pupil premium and the Primary School Sport funding. Governors are effective in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114235
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	430864

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Coates
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Noble (Acting Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 581 3090
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