

St Bede's RC Primary School

Kingsway, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 3ES

Inspection dates 27–28 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The acting headteacher leads the school with passion and commitment and commands the loyalty and respect of staff, governors and parents. He is ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher. Together they have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and have clear plans in place that are leading to further improvements.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards have risen rapidly over the last few years and are above average. More pupils are now attaining higher levels by the end of Year 6, especially in reading and mathematics. They are well prepared for secondary school.
- Teaching is consistently good. High expectations and relationships with pupils are strengths. Pupils benefit from teachers' secure subject knowledge and excellent behaviour management.
- The school is highly successful in supporting disadvantaged pupils and those who need help to catch up in their learning.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. They make good progress in developing their speech, language and communication skills.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning contribute to their good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Pupils are polite and considerate, and have excellent and respectful relationships with members of staff.
- All pupils feel completely safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using computers.
- The school's provision to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, so that pupils are extremely well prepared to be considerate citizens in modern Britain. Pupils benefit from a wide range of vibrant learning opportunities.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and support and challenge senior leaders effectively.
- Parents have great respect for the school and complete confidence and trust in the staff to provide a warm, welcoming and nurturing environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking and feedback do not always indicate to pupils how to improve their work, and teachers do not consistently provide opportunities for pupils to respond to their advice.
- Newly appointed middle leaders are not fully effective in monitoring and improving their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that arrangements to assess pupils' abilities and track their progress are sufficiently well developed to support them to make the best possible progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 16 lessons, one of which was jointly observed with the headteacher. They also made a number of shorter visits to classes.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and carried out a detailed scrutiny of their written work in several subjects.
- Inspectors heard a sample of pupils in Years 1 and 6 read, and talked with them about their reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils to hear their views on learning and behaviour in the school. They also spoke informally with pupils during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities and six members of the governing body. An inspector held a meeting with a representative of a private provider which is providing support to gather further evidence about the school.
- Inspectors examined a variety of school documents. These included records of current pupils' progress, the school's view of how well it is doing, its improvement plans, and behaviour and attendance logs. Inspectors also examined minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 25 members of staff, the 50 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and two telephone responses. They also spoke informally with parents before the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Kevin Dodd, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Dame Nicola Nelson-Taylor	Additional Inspector
Paula Thompson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Bede's RC Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average. These pupils are supported by the pupil premium which is additional funding provided for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below the national average.
- The early years unit has recently been expanded to accommodate 45 Reception children. It also has a class for Nursery children who attend on a part-time basis.
- St Bede's RC Primary School converted to become an academy in August 2012. When the predecessor school, also called St Bede's RC Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2010 it was judged to be good.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school has been through a period of instability since the previous inspection. There have been a number of staff changes, including the appointment of an acting headteacher and deputy headteacher in September 2014.
- The school has a breakfast club run by the governing body.
- The school benefits from the support of The Carmel Education Trust which is a Multi-Academy Trust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the already good teaching, in order to raise achievement further, particularly in writing, by:
 - improving marking so that it consistently shows pupils how to make their work better, and ensuring pupils respond to, and act on, this advice
 - involving pupils more in assessing their own and other pupils' work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring newly appointed middle leaders check teaching and learning more rigorously and that feedback to staff about how to improve their teaching and pupils' learning is clear and acted upon
 - improving the tracking of pupils' progress so that the achievement of different groups of pupils can be identified more swiftly and the necessary support put in place to help them
 - making sure that leaders and governors fully understand what progress pupils are capable of and what constitutes good or better progress for pupils given their individual starting points.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher leads the school with passion and a commitment to meeting fully the needs of all pupils. Inspection questionnaires returned by staff indicate that morale is high and that staff share the headteacher's commitment to doing the best for all pupils in their care.
- The acting headteacher is supported extremely well by the acting deputy headteacher and governors. As an effective team, they have taken strong action to improve standards rapidly in reading and mathematics and for pupils with special educational needs. They are also leading further improvements in writing effectively.
- Good systems are in place to check on all aspects of teaching and learning. The school has worked hard to ensure that teachers are accurate in their assessment of pupils' attainment and progress but leaders recognise they are at an early stage of refining their systems to take account of recent national guidance. Leaders at all levels provide good support to help other staff improve what they do, including providing opportunities for them to take part in relevant training. Middle leaders are playing an increasingly effective role but those who are new in their posts have not yet been given the opportunity to check on teaching, learning and support, to enhance their understanding of what constitutes good or better progress.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and what still needs to be done to sustain and develop ongoing improvements.
- School leaders ensure that the school's systems for managing behaviour are followed consistently, so that pupils' behaviour is outstanding and supports learning.
- The school's system of setting targets to manage teachers' performance is well organised and rigorous. There is evidence that this has led to improved teaching.
- The curriculum is lively and interesting, with a clear focus on developing pupils' tolerance and respect for others. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about, and reflect on, their feelings and the world about them, through themes as diverse as 'Britain is Great', storytelling, remembrance and famous historical characters. Pupils talk animatedly about links with a school in Kenya and of clubs such as 'Zumba', hockey, dance, gymnastics and football. The curriculum therefore contributes exceptionally well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and helps them prepare for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders make very good use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. It has been used to provide additional small teaching groups, one-to-one support, and to develop the skills of teaching assistants. The funding is also used to ensure that all eligible pupils can benefit fully from the wide range of the school's activities, including visits and breakfast club.
- The school has used the funding provided by the government to increase sports provision very well. It has employed coaches to provide skilled tuition for all pupils, increased the range of sporting activities and improved the skills of staff. As a result, pupils' standards in a range of sports have improved, as have their levels of fitness and success in competitions at both local and district level.
- The acting headteacher and governors ensure that the school rejects all forms of discrimination, fosters good relationships and promotes equality of opportunity strongly.
- The vast majority of parents are extremely positive in their views about the school, which they say is 'warm and welcoming with a caring and family ethos.' They add, 'The headteacher has been an inspiration.' They enjoy being given the opportunity to work alongside their children in class, and to attend workshops in mathematics and phonics (letters and the sounds they make) which help them to support their children's learning.
- The school has recently secured the services of a private provider to begin to improve the tracking of pupils' progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective and contributes fully to the planning and checking of the school's work. Governors have effective structures in place for fulfilling all their statutory responsibilities. They have benefited from a range of appropriate training including safeguarding. Governors are well informed about all aspects of the school's work.
 - They have a good grasp of how well the various groups of pupils are progressing and of the published data on the school. Discussions showed that governors challenge the school's leaders, for example when they enquired deeply into the quality of boys' writing. Governors are involved in checking the quality of teaching by visiting the school and holding discussions with subject leaders, as well as receiving reports from the headteacher. Governors understand the importance of improving teachers' performance and the systems for doing so. They ensure that teachers on higher pay scales make a

good contribution to the school and that only those teachers who have met their performance management targets receive pay increases.

- They also ensure that finances are managed well and are especially astute when it comes to appointing and supporting senior leaders. Governors have a detailed understanding of how the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and sports is spent and how it is helping to improve achievement. They make sure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet all current government requirements and are very effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' desire to learn makes a strong contribution to their good progress. Pupils pay close attention in lessons, follow instructions carefully, share their own ideas and listen respectfully to the views of others.
- Pupils are exceptionally well mannered and welcoming. They speak politely to all staff and routinely hold doors open for each other and for adults. Pupils take great pride in their school and treat all resources with great respect.
- Pupils move calmly around the complex school site and play extremely well together in the outside areas. Older pupils show great care for those younger than themselves, and support the staff by taking on positions of responsibility such as peer mentors.
- The school maintains a detailed behaviour log. This shows that the school employs a range of successful sanctions to improve the behaviour of the very small number of pupils whose conduct does not meet expectations. The pupils who spoke with inspectors consider that behaviour is, in their words, 'usually very good' and that staff are extremely skilled at dealing with any minor misbehaviour.
- Pupils' very strong social and moral development enables them to respect each other and understand the consequences of their actions. This contributes to their outstanding behaviour.
- Attendance is above average and improving because of detailed monitoring, good relations with parents and strong interventions when needed. Pupils arrive at lessons on time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils report, 'It's really safe at playtime; we are all a school family.' They appreciate the very good care that staff take of them and have confidence in them. As one remarked, 'If I was being bullied I would talk to a teacher or to a peer mentor.'
- All policies relating to safety and safeguarding are reviewed regularly and are consistently implemented. The identities of all visitors to the school are checked carefully and the acting headteacher is rigorous in managing child protection.
- The curriculum supports pupils in learning how to stay safe in different situations, including the dangers of fire. Pupils have a good understanding of cyber-bullying and of e-safety, including how to avoid unsafe websites.
- Pupils have a good understanding of most types of bullying. They say that there is very little bullying of any kind and that when it occurs it is dealt with swiftly by staff. This is supported by the school's records.
- In their questionnaire responses, all staff and parents agree that pupils are safe and happy at school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is typically good and often better. Work seen in pupils' books and evidence gathered during the inspection show that teaching is leading to pupils' rapidly rising achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's records show that the quality of teaching is checked efficiently and confirm that it is leading to effective learning.
- Lessons are well planned and start promptly. Teachers show good subject knowledge and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work. Pupils respond extremely well to these high expectations.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their thorough knowledge of pupils' abilities to plan exciting and interesting activities. These activities are challenging enough for all the different groups of pupils and enthuse them to learn. Questioning is used skilfully to check pupils' understanding before moving to the next part of the lesson; teachers are prepared to adapt their plans when needed.

- On the small number of occasions when learning is less effective, these strong features are less evident, and some pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are extremely good, so that pupils can give their opinions in confidence when solving problems or joining in debates.
- Pupils needing extra help, such as disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs, are given well-targeted support by highly trained teaching assistants, as well as by teachers, so that they can catch up with their classmates and make good progress.
- Marking, however, does not consistently show pupils exactly how to make their work better, particularly in writing. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to respond to, and act on, advice given and to check their own and other children's work in order to extend their learning and progress further. School leaders are working together to ensure that all pupils benefit from the pockets of excellent practice seen in mathematics in this area.
- Pupils read well, and with enjoyment, because of the close attention given to ensuring they learn the range of skills of reading. A coherent programme that teaches pupils about phonics begins in the Reception class and continues throughout the school.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Across the school, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in all three subjects has improved notably since 2013.
- Similarly, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics is above average.
- The results of the national screening check at the end of Year 1 on pupils' knowledge of phonics are below average. The school has provided additional booster sessions and the school's assessment information indicates pupils are now on track to achieve above average scores. Almost all older pupils read fluently and understand what they are reading.
- Across the school, the progress that pupils make shows little variability between classes. Pupils make strongest progress in reading and mathematics. School leaders have recognised this and have taken appropriate action which has accelerated progress in writing. The school regularly checks the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. As a result of good support, these pupils are making progress equal to that of their peers and better than similar pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics and reach high standards at the end of Year 6. In 2014, a significantly above average proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 5 in reading and mathematics and an above average proportion reached this level in writing. At the end of Year 2 an average proportion of pupils reached Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. There are too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 each year to make any valid comparison between their attainment and that of other pupils in school and also non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

The early years provision is good

- Most children start school with skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age. There is an increasing proportion of children whose skills in speech, language and communication are below those typical, and activities are specifically planned to help these children develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Most of those who are behind at the start soon catch up. All children, whatever their starting points, go on to make good progress in the early years because the quality of teaching is good overall. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of Reception is average.
- The leadership has an accurate view of strengths of the area. It is also taking concerted action to improve the learning environment and staff are working increasingly more effectively as a newly established team. They recognise the need to improve the accuracy of assessing the progress made by children and using this information to identify and improve weaker areas of learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together skilfully. Learning in the safe and caring environment where adults model speech well develops children's self-esteem and their language and social skills very effectively. This ensures that they are well-prepared to move into Year 1. Children play purposefully and quickly learn how to share with others and follow the school's routines.
- The behaviour of children is outstanding. They quickly learn the school's high expectations, follow all the

school's rules and show a strong desire to learn. They feel safe and are encouraged to explore their environment and develop an understanding of risks.

- In the current classes, children are benefiting from good teaching and are making good progress in all areas of learning although reading and writing activities are not always sufficiently challenging for more able pupils.
- The provision is checked regularly to ensure children's safety and well-being. Parents say that they are very happy with the care and support their children receive, and that staff are very approachable.

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	138523
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	449711

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Fairbank
Headteacher	Michael Tiplady
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01325 466411
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