

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School

Stratford Road, Hartlepool, County Durham, TS25 5AJ

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' progress has slowed in the recent past and standards at the end of Year 6 are below average in most subjects, particularly in mathematics. From their starting points, too few pupils make good progress, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not always make the progress they should. At the end of Key Stage 2, this often leads to gaps in attainment between these pupils and their classmates, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching over time has not been good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can. Expectations have not always been high enough and guidance to help pupils improve has been inconsistent. This is particularly so in mathematics.
- The skills of other leaders in monitoring school improvement are not fully developed.
- Over time, the checks made and the assessment of the impact of leaders' actions has not been rigorous or accurate enough.
- Early years provision requires improvement. Teachers do not always plan opportunities to extend children's learning quickly enough. Activities children choose for themselves are not always linked clearly to learning.
- Assessment information about pupils is not always used to set tasks that provide the right levels of challenge needed for pupils to improve.
- The school's systems for analysing pupils' attainment and progress do not readily provide leaders with the information they need about groups of pupils. This makes it difficult for leaders, including governors, to check that their actions are resulting in the improvements needed.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They enjoy school, and feel safe and well cared for by staff in a welcoming and happy environment.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and take a pride in their work, particularly in their writing.
- The headteacher and the governing body are committed to improving the school and have tackled weak teaching.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in a wide range of school activities.
- The headteacher is resolute and determined to ensure that all pupils achieve their best. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving through training and support and achievement is rising.
- Phonics teaching (teaching letters and the sounds they make) is effective. This is leading to improvements in pupils' reading skills so standards are now rising.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. Discussions were also held with a representative from the local authority.
- They looked at a range of evidence including: the school's improvement plan; the school's data relating to pupils' progress; the work in pupils' books; and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during break times and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons and parts of lessons taught by teachers and support staff. One was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- The inspectors took into account the 25 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also took into account the views of parents by meeting them informally at the start and end of the school day.
- The responses from 32 staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Irene Cochrane, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frank Cain

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes in staff since the previous inspection. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2012.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through the pupil premium, is above average. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds, although the school caters for a few pupils from minority ethnic heritages and for those who speak English as an additional language.
- Increasingly across the year groups, a number of pupils enter the school at different times throughout the year.
- The school provides full time places for children in the Reception classes and part time places for children in the nursery.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school receives support from a National Leader of Education (NLE) based at St John Vianney Primary School.
- The school provides out-of-school care in the form of a breakfast club and after-school clubs.
- The school has recently received the bronze Parent Teacher Association (PTA) award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the early years, to good or better so that pupils make faster progress and consistent gains in achievement by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in mathematics and including the early years, by making better use of the information about pupils' progress so that tasks build on individual starting points and prior learning
 - sharing best practice even more widely so that all learning is inspiring and challenging
 - making regular checks during lessons so that pupils understand what is expected of them and are on track to achieve or exceed their learning targets
 - ensuring teachers' feedback and written comments help pupils to move quickly to the next steps in their learning, especially in mathematics.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - improving systems for refining and analysing pupils' attainment and progress so leaders can check their actions are making a difference to the achievement of different groups of pupils, especially that of the disadvantaged pupils
 - measuring the impact of actions identified in the school's improvement plan with more precisely identified timescales and performance measures
 - further developing the skills of leaders other than the headteacher I so they can check the impact of their actions and thus contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning and raise achievement.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's performance and where it needs to improve further. Effective action has been taken to manage a significant number of staffing changes and a re-organisation within school since she took up her position. She has moved staff to different classes to maximise their strengths in teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and a culture of higher expectations is evident in most classes.
- Through more rigorous performance management processes, the headteacher and deputy headteacher are working with staff to set more appropriate and challenging targets. This is leading to greater accountability and higher expectations for pupil outcomes. However, some leaders of subjects or sections of the school are still developing their skills, for example in judging the effectiveness of teaching. As a result, the quality of learning and teaching in English and mathematics and the provision in the early years have not been consistently good enough to have a positive impact on standards.
- Although leaders know how well individual pupils are progressing, the school's system for monitoring and analysing progress does not provide leaders readily with the detailed information they need about the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- The school development plan identifies the right key priorities and objectives to secure good overall effectiveness. However, the targets set are not always linked sharply to pupils' progress or measurable enough in terms of timescales to help school leaders to check the impact of their actions and raise standards quickly.
- The pupil premium is not being used to full effect so that attainment gaps close quickly enough between disadvantaged pupils and others. Systems to check and evaluate the difference this funding is making are underdeveloped.
- The school makes sure that all pupils are included in all aspects of school life. Pupils are happy in school and learn to accept one another's differences, which is supported by the friendships formed by pupils and by their good behaviour. Any form of discrimination is tackled effectively. However, the schools effectiveness in ensuring equality of opportunity is not fully met because not all groups of pupils make good progress.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils work well together, show respect towards one another and offer help to their classmates in lessons. The subjects on offer provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of fundamental British values.
- The school welcomes the support it has received more recently from the local authority and its support staff who have helped to improve the quality of pupils' writing, early years provision and training for governors. Strong links with other schools, such as the teaching school alliance and the support of the NLE have enabled the school to improve swiftly over the past few months.
- The curriculum has been re-organised around topics with a key focus maintained on pupils' basic skills and personal development. Pupils report that they find their learning interesting and regularly welcome visitors to the school and participate in visits which enhance their understanding of the world.
- The school is using the primary sport funding effectively. This funding has been used to extend the range of sports on offer and engage a specialist member of staff. The school is part of the local school partnership. More pupils are engaged in physical activities and there are increased opportunities for after-school sports activities.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. The present Chair of the Governing Body is a driving force for improvement. She ensures an increased rigour in holding leaders to account through weekly discussions with the headteacher. She also visits classrooms to see pupils and work and listens to pupils read.
 - Governors are highly committed and very supportive of the school and ensure that it fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. As a result of information from the headteacher and training from the local authority, governors now have an increased role in challenging the school leadership about pupils' achievement.
 - Governors understand the importance of rigorous performance management, although the link between performance and salary increases is not always robust enough.
 - Governors are aware that the quality of teaching over time has not been good enough and that this is a high priority for the school. They understand that any underperformance must be tackled and that rewards for good teaching must be linked to pupils' progress. They have been supportive in eliminating

weak teaching.

- Governors' work to monitor and check the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding, in order to overcome barriers to learning and to reduce gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others, needs further development.
- Governors attend training that helps them to carry out their duties, including safer recruitment and understanding pupil performance data. As a result, they hold regular pupil progress meetings, review data and have funded additional resources and adult support to assist improvements in writing and mathematics. They understand that the sports premium monies have been well used to extend opportunities for pupils and increase their enjoyment and engagement in physical activities.

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

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. At times, behaviour in some upper Key Stage 2 lessons is exemplary.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around school at lunch and break times. The school is a happy and friendly place to be where pupils are willing to take on extra responsibilities and show tolerance and respect towards one another and adults. The school's systems and routines for managing behaviour work well and pupils understand them. Pupils' know which teacher has responsibility for managing behaviour and say that behaviour has improved since the current headteacher arrived.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They treat each other and their teachers respectfully and are proud to welcome visitors into their school. For example, they were keen to talk about their work and their school.
- The good behaviour and attitudes to learning observed in the large majority of classes make an important contribution to the positive climate for learning. Pupils get on with their work quickly, are keen to learn and share their ideas with their friends. Only occasionally is this not evident. Pupils are most attentive and enthusiastic when teaching captures their interest and imagination. Even when activities are less engaging, pupils remain on task.
- Although pupils say that behaviour is good, a few parents and staff think improvements could be made. Inspection evidence, including a scrutiny of the school's records of behaviour, indicates that behaviour is typically good.
- Attendance is average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils understand different types of bullying and say that such incidents are rare. They are confident that any incidents that arise are dealt with quickly. As pupils said 'If you don't have anything nice to say, people shouldn't say it.'
- As a result of recent e-safety training, pupils are well aware of cyber bullying and understand the potential risks in sharing passwords.
- Pupils say they feel safe because they have confidence that their teachers look after them. They appreciate that the cameras and security alarms, as well as the school fence, are there to protect them.
- They understand what to do in case of fire and when crossing the road because of the training they receive at school.
- Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are cared for very well.

The quality of teaching **requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it has not been good enough over time to ensure that all pupils make good progress. This is particularly so in mathematics where teaching has not been strong enough to ensure that all groups of pupils do well, particularly those who are disadvantaged. In contrast, the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement in reading is a strength. Although the quality of teaching is now mostly good and improving, some inconsistencies remain. Opportunities are provided to share good practice within the school with new members of staff but this is still at an early stage of development across the school.
- Despite the good and sometimes excellent relationships between staff and pupils, not enough use is made of the available assessment information to ensure that learning is sufficiently matched to pupils' differing abilities. Adults regularly and appropriately use praise and encouragement, which motivate pupils and, as

a result, maintains their interest and their contribution to their own learning.

- Most teachers now challenge pupils to tackle harder work more resourcefully through activities that are suitable for every pupil's needs. This was evident in Year 6, where pupils were using protractors to work out angles when designing 'stickmen'. Pupils explained that they liked this kind of activity because it was hard and helped them to get better. One commented, 'I like a challenge because it gets my mind thinking.' However, not all teaching is as demanding, as it lacks the highest possible expectations of what pupils can achieve. In addition, not all teachers check how well pupils are performing during the lesson so that they can make sure pupils achieve their full potential.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school and has been given high priority, reflected in the purchase of additional reading books and resources. A structured approach to ensuring that pupils understand the sounds that letters make is having a positive impact on their reading. There is a wide range of books available for pupils to choose from and they know that they are expected to read at home as well as in school to practise and develop their skills. Teachers encourage pupils to think about the books they have read, in order to develop their writing styles. This was observed during the inspection when a Year 6 pupil was keen to share his own account of 'Kensuke's Kingdom' and enthusiastically offered to read his story to the inspector.
- Teaching is improving as a result of feedback from regular lesson observations, training and support. Books that contain pupils' written work are mostly very well presented with a high standard of handwriting, and they show that progress is accelerating. Around the school, there are many good quality displays of pupils' writing that serve to celebrate success and to share pupils' learning and experiences. However, this high standard of work is not as evident in mathematics books nor in the quantity or quality of mathematical displays.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, especially when they find it practical and well matched to their needs. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson when pupils were converting metres into centimetres and sorting workcards into order, pupils were focused and keen to complete the task in hand. They say they enjoy their lessons and especially mathematics when there are practical activities that teachers plan.
- Teaching assistants make valuable contributions to support pupils' learning, particularly for less-able pupils and those who are at risk of underachievement. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows for pupils when the support they provide is not as well matched as it could be to pupils' ability.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly and they receive good advice on how to improve their work in writing. They do not always have the same advice in mathematics.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although the progress of pupils is now quickening, including in their writing and mathematics, their achievement requires improvement because, over time, too few pupils have made the progress expected of them. This is particularly so in writing and mathematics. In 2014, the proportion of pupils making more-than-expected progress was below average in reading, writing and mathematics, although closer to average in reading.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who met the expected standard in the national screening check on phonics (letters and sounds they make) was above the national average. This is because the school develops children's skills in reading at an early age through daily practice. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly and those who read to an inspector did so with confidence and enjoyment. They were able to talk about their love of books and authors and how they tried to read at home every night.
- Over the past three years, end-of-key-stage test results show that standards at the end of Year 2 have risen slightly and are now average.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, attainment was significantly below average in mathematics, writing and spelling, grammar and punctuation. Attainment in reading improved and was average. Standards were adversely affected in 2014 by the specific characteristics of those Year 6 pupils. Recent data indicate that gaps between different pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs, are closing, although some inconsistencies remain, particularly in writing.
- The most able pupils are now benefiting from targeted support and raised expectations from teachers to ensure they know what they have to do to reach their full potential. In 2014, the proportion who attained the higher Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 was above average in writing and just below average in reading and mathematics. Inspection evidence confirms that an increased proportion of the most able in the current Year 6 are set to attain the higher Level 5. However, in 2014 fewer pupils than seen nationally reached the higher levels in mathematics, writing, and spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- School leaders recognised that the teaching of mathematics needed to improve. As a result, they have put

strategies in place, such as re-organising classes, reviewing policies and a greater emphasis on practical mathematics and resources. However, these systems have not been in place long enough to have had a full impact on standards.

- In 2014, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs attained below average standards in mathematics and writing but above average in reading. Their progress was better compared to similar pupils nationally in reading, below in mathematics and weakest in writing. When any additional help is required, staff identify this early. Pupils respond well to this, both in classrooms and through targeted support work. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and are supported well to contribute in lessons. The school meets the needs of these pupils appropriately.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils attained approximately two terms behind non-disadvantaged classmates in mathematics, a term ahead in reading and a term behind in writing. When compared to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally they attained almost a year and a half behind in mathematics, a term behind in reading and a year behind in writing. These gaps widened in mathematics and writing from 2013 and closed in reading. The lack of an effective system for analysing the progress of this group is a barrier to leaders' and governors' ability to rigorously check that the pupil premium funding is making the difference needed for these pupils.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children enter nursery with skills that are below those typically expected for their age. Skills in personal and social development and reading and writing and understanding of the world are sometimes particularly low. Most children make the progress expected of them. However, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is lower than that seen nationally. Consequently, not all children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Parents are welcomed into the early years setting and encouraged to take part in their children's learning. Relationships are strengthening in the nursery as a result of shared information and opportunities to come into school.
- Following a number of staffing changes, the highly experienced interim leader of early years has swiftly made changes to the day-to-day organisation and learning environment. These changes are having a positive impact on improving progress. Current school data suggest that the proportion of children on track to reach a good level of development has improved and attainment at the end of the year will be more in line with the national average. There are plans for improving the provision further through continued training for staff, reviewed assessment systems and better transition arrangements between nursery and the Reception classes.
- Although improvements are in place, the quality of leadership and of teaching over time require improvement because staff do not always assess the progress children make rigorously enough or plan opportunities to extend their learning through effective child-initiated activities. For example, planning does not always challenge children at the correct level and tasks that children can choose themselves sometimes lack meaningful links to learning. As a result, children are not always supported to make consistently good progress.
- Staff make best use of the outdoor area but recognise its limitations and have plans for improvement. Relationships are good and impact positively upon the children's good behaviour and their willingness to respond readily to instructions. Children are kind to each other and keen to engage in the activities provided. They are able to take turns and share learning resources. The safeguarding arrangements help to make sure the children are safe and well looked after. Adults working with children who are known to be vulnerable due their personal circumstances and those for whom English is an additional language are sensitive to their needs and support the children well. In the nursery, children's work is celebrated through displays. They are developing an enjoyment of reading through hearing stories read aloud.

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	111692
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	456112

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	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Merrifield
Headteacher	Joanne Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	8 September 2011
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