

St Bede's Catholic Primary School

Strathclyde Avenue, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA2 7DS

Inspection dates 15–16 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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 school is led by a dedicated and caring headteacher who is relentless in her drive to bring about improvements.
- Leaders at all levels, staff and governors share her drive and ambition for the school. As a result morale is high and teamwork is effective.
- The good leadership and management at all levels has led to improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good. As a result most pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014 the progress made by pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 was in the top 20 percent of schools.
- Pupils' behaviour is good across the school, in classrooms and outside. They are eager to learn, and this helps them to make good progress.
- Pupils say they feel very safe and well looked after. This view is shared by all staff and parents.
- Early years provision is good. Children settle quickly in the vibrant, exciting environment because of the care and attention they receive when they join.
- The curriculum and the range of after-school activities promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The strong emphasis on promoting pupils' understanding of values prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Governors provide good challenge and support to school leaders and are keen to become even more effective.
- The overwhelming majority of parents value the school highly and are very supportive of its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, the work set, especially for the most able pupils is not hard enough to enable them to reach the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Teachers do not always ensure marking is effective by checking that pupils follow up the advice provided.
- Targets contained within the school's improvement plan lack the necessary precision to drive improvement forward more rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons. In addition, they made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. They also gathered other evidence relating to the quality of teaching over time.
- The inspectors observed one lesson jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and senior and middle leaders. They also met with nine governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account the 23 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also spoke informally with groups of parents who brought their children to school.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and scrutinised the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, improvement plans, planning and monitoring information and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors also reviewed records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Anthony Kingston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Since the time of the previous inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. The headteacher took up the post in October 2014 following a short period of fulfilling the role as acting headteacher.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding that the school receives for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are in the care of the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The early years comprises a Nursery class, which offers part-time places in the morning and a Reception class, where children attend on a full-time basis.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further and increase pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - work is hard enough, especially for the most able pupils, to enable them to reach the highest possible standards especially in writing
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to apply their writing skills in subjects other than English
 - teachers' feedback including marking effectively and consistently helps pupils to improve their work.
- Ensure that the targets contained within the school's action plans for improvement are more precise so that improvements are driven forward even more rapidly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since taking up her appointment the headteacher has been relentless in her drive to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards. She provides strong, highly effective leadership and clear direction. Her ambitious vision is extremely well supported by senior leaders, staff at all levels and governors. Morale is high and teamwork is very strong. This is reflected in the very positive responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Leadership at all levels is also strong. For example, subject leaders play an important role in monitoring and improving teaching in those subjects for which they are responsible. They know where strengths and areas for development lie. There is a firm commitment to providing opportunities for teachers to continue to develop their skills especially through the readiness to share ideas and the very effective use of in-school coaching and mentoring.
- The school's own evaluations of its work are accurate and are used to identify appropriate priorities for improvement. Improvements made since the previous inspection, particularly in the levels attained by pupils in writing and improved provision in the early years, reflect the successful actions taken to raise standards. However, the school improvement plan does not include sufficiently precise targets against which leaders and managers can check and measure the improvements to teaching and learning and thereby make sure that the school improves at a more rapid rate.
- The local authority has a very good relationship with the school. It presents effective challenge and support in equal measure.
- The school manages staff performance well. Teachers and additional adults are given targets which are linked to how well they teach and how well pupils progress. Alongside governors, leaders ensure that only the best teaching is rewarded financially through salary progression.
- The curriculum is exciting. Woven through the curriculum are the core skills of reading, mathematics and computing. However, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to apply and practise their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- The richness of the curriculum including the wide and exciting range of after school clubs such as the Muddy Boots rambling club promote pupils' social, moral and spiritual development extremely well. The school through all of its work promotes British values, such as respect, honesty and tolerance of others' beliefs. This was exemplified by a group of pupils who agreed that, 'What's important in a person is what is in their heart and mind. It's not the colour of their skin, their faith or their culture.' Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The exceptionally strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development made by the curriculum was demonstrated by a spectacular performance of dance and music by Year 5 pupils telling the story of Rama and Sita in readiness for a county wide celebration of performing arts.
- The excellent relationships in the school are underpinned by a caring and nurturing culture. Staff do not tolerate discrimination of any kind.
- The school checks that all pupils have equality of opportunity to succeed. Overall, the needs of all groups of pupils, especially those who have special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged are identified promptly and support is provided where most needed. The pupil premium funding is used wisely. Each pupil is identified, their needs evaluated and funds used to provide additional support or assistance for educational visits. This is helping them to make progress similar to and often better than their classmates.
- The primary sports funding has been used very effectively to provide additional opportunities for pupils to take advantage of specialist coaching in sports such as football, cricket, fencing and gymnastics. These activities, both in and out of school, are well attended and are improving the health of pupils and their level of skill. For example, the girls' cricket team were crowned Cumbria County Champions in 2014 and represented Cumbria in the All England Cricket finals. It is also enabling the skills of teachers to be developed.
- Safeguarding arrangements fully meet statutory requirements. They are extremely robust and contribute to ensuring pupils feel exceptionally safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are astute, highly committed and know the school well. With the support of the local authority they have become more effective in challenging leaders to improve the school. They have a range of expertise that they use effectively to hold the school to account. Governors visit the school and regularly experience life in classrooms. They have developed an effective system whereby they meet and talk with teachers and pupils, providing them with valuable first-hand information to monitor and

evaluate the work of the school. As a result, governors know the school well and have a good understanding about the quality of teaching and school data. They have undertaken a relevant range of training and have a good understanding of how to fulfil their roles successfully and analyse data so that they can compare the performance of St Bede's with all other schools nationally. They are, therefore, extremely well equipped to provide leaders with strong levels of challenge. Governors set clear targets in managing the performance of the headteacher and make sure any staff pay increases link to pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They are polite, courteous, welcoming to visitors and keen to show them their work.
- Pupils are eager to take on extra responsibilities, such as becoming active members of the school council, playground buddies and corridor monitors. The way in which they carry out their responsibilities help in the smooth running of the school.
- The school's systems to encourage good behaviour are understood by pupils and applied consistently by staff that have high expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and respond well to adults' questions and suggestions. They work thoughtfully during group work, considering and respecting each others' views. However, occasionally when teaching is not as effective, a few pupils lose concentration and do not complete their work as well as they should. Even then they are careful not to disrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils are very appreciative of the time their teachers give to the running of a wealth of lunch time and after-school clubs. This led one pupil to say, 'It makes us want to do everything they ask so that we can give something back to them.'
- Pupils, overwhelmingly, say that they all get on very well together. This was exemplified at break times and lunch time when boys and girls of all ages played extremely well together.
- The strong partnership the school has with families and the initiatives it has introduced to encourage regular attendance are having a positive impact. Consequently, attendance is rising and is now close to average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school keeps children safe. A number of parents said that the school was like 'one big family.' One parent clarified this by saying, 'The school's brilliant. Every adult knows every child in the school. They would do anything to protect and care for them.'
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school because adults look after them extremely well. They know that adults in the school will listen to their concerns and do all they can to help to resolve them. The school's learning mentor is pivotal in developing this level of pupils' confidence.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of different kinds of bullying. They know that it can take many forms, for example, in relation to race and differing beliefs and that name-calling or excluding someone can be equally as hurtful as hitting someone. They also know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, for instance, when using the internet.
- Governors visit the school regularly to carry out checks on safety and act immediately upon their findings.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good. Pupils achieve well and are highly motivated. Observations of teaching by leaders and inspectors and evidence of the good standards in books show that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Displays in classrooms, corridors and communal areas of the school are stunning. They show the richness of the curriculum and celebrate pupils' achievements and efforts across a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and generally provide them with challenging work well matched to pupils' different needs. However, observations of classrooms and pupils' books reveal that very occasionally work is too easy, especially for the most-able pupils. For example, occasionally the opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills through their topic work are limited because of the

use of poor-quality photocopied worksheets.

- Reading is promoted well across the school. Pupils say they like reading and are given many opportunities to read in class. Pupils are able to describe with clarity how they would work out unfamiliar words using the different methods they have been taught.
- The teaching of writing is good. Pupils write confidently and fluently, benefiting from regular opportunities to exchange ideas and talk through and plan how they intend to write. They skilfully apply their knowledge of punctuation and grammar to improve the quality of their stories. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- The teaching of mathematics is also good. Pupils are able to draw upon a range of methods in order to carry out mathematical tasks independently and apply their knowledge and skills to problem solving activities.
- Teaching assistants provide crucial support for learning. They routinely liaise very closely with teachers, assessing the effectiveness of their support to promote good standards of achievement. They are often responsible for specific group tuition, using an effective range of strategies to help pupils who have special educational needs or those who are in danger of falling behind. They are skilled and highly effective in giving pupils a boost to their learning.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and conscientiously. However, the extent to which the feedback including marking helps pupils to improve is variable. As a result pupils do not eradicate their errors and continue making them in successive pieces of work.
- All parents who responded to the online questionnaire agree that their children are taught well.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 have improved from significantly below average in reading, writing and mathematics at the time of the previous inspection to broadly average in 2014.
- Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling were average in 2014. Standards in writing were below average. This was because not enough pupils reached either the expected Level 4 or the higher Level 5 in this subject. However, leaders have tackled this issue and school data and inspection evidence shows that pupils' progress in writing is accelerating.
- National test results in 2014 show that the proportion of pupils who made expected and better than expected progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in reading and mathematics was above average. In writing the proportion of pupils who made expected and better than expected progress was below average. Overall, the progress made by Year 6 pupils in 2014 from the time they entered Key Stage 2 was in the top 20 percent of schools nationally. Current data and inspection evidence indicate that progress made by all groups of pupils continues to accelerate and as a result standards are improving rapidly.
- Reading is a priority throughout the school.
- The teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds they make) is enabling younger pupils to tackle new and unfamiliar words with greater confidence. This is reflected in the high proportion of six-year-olds who achieved the expected level and above in the 2014 national screening check on phonics.
- As pupils move through the school, they continue to develop a love of reading. This was exemplified by a group of Year 6 pupils who agreed that they enjoyed using their imaginations to, 'enter places which could never exist in our world, to visualise the characters and their actions and experience their emotions.' This was reflected in the way pupils threw themselves fully into characterisation, reading with expression and feeling.
- Standards in writing are improving rapidly. Writing is helped by the emphasis that is given to reading and the effectively structured guided reading sessions which help to boost pupils' vocabulary. Discussions before they set to work are enhancing pupils' fluency and the meaning of what they write. For example, among many other examples a Year 6 pupil taking on the character of Anne Frank wrote, 'I collected my precious belongings – everything from plates, glasses and even a vase. I shovelled them into my satchel because these were memories and more important than clothes.'
- Overall, the most able pupils achieve well. However, on occasions work in some classes does not provide them with sufficient challenge, especially in writing. Consequently, they do not always make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants, who understand each individual pupil's needs well. The plans for this support are carefully put together and regularly checked to ensure that they are overcoming the issues each pupil faces. Consequently, these pupils make good progress and become confident in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Results in national tests in 2014 show that non-disadvantaged pupils attained standards well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The standards attained by disadvantaged pupils in 2014 were well below average. This was largely due to the composition of this group of pupils. Consequently, the standards reached were four terms behind other pupils in the school in reading, five terms behind in mathematics and six terms behind in writing. These results also showed that disadvantaged pupils were two terms behind all pupils nationally in reading, four terms in writing and two terms behind in mathematics.
- As a result of the effective spending of the pupil premium funding, disadvantaged pupils make at least and often better progress than other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is a little below this.
- Current data and inspection evidence of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school show that they are catching up with their classmates. This demonstrates the school's success in narrowing the gaps between disadvantaged pupils' and that of other pupils.

The early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the early years are good. The leader has an accurate understanding of the unit's strengths and areas for development. The leader has overseen improvements in the provision and children's achievement since the previous inspection.
- Children start in the early years with skills which, for the overwhelming majority, are below those typical for their age. A few are significantly below, especially in communication and language, reading and mathematics. A few do have skills typical for their age.
- Children settle quickly and progress well throughout their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result by the end of Reception their attainment is similar to other pupils of their age and they are well prepared for Year 1. This is because the quality of teaching is good and adults provide a range of exciting activities and experiences for children to engage in. For example, one group of children were absorbed in the role-play gardening centre and using mirrors to investigate the symmetry of flowers and butterflies. Others were absorbed in searching for answers to an exciting and challenging addition and subtraction number hunt which led them into calculation activities using number sentences up to 20.
- Children behave very well and show kindness and consideration to one another. They work cooperatively together on different tasks, sharing equipment and taking turns.
- Teaching assistants are an invaluable resource and skilfully support and nurture children to develop skills in all areas of learning. They work as a strong team to plan learning, to check children's progress and to record small steps of development.
- Assessments are used well to plan future learning experiences that match children's needs and interests. This promotes good gains in their learning.
- The indoor and outdoor spaces provide children with vibrant learning areas. Resources are easily accessible to the children and are well chosen to stimulate interest. They contribute well to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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	112369
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	461747

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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Castell
Headteacher	Louise McMillan
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2011
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