

# St Cuthbert's RC Primary School

Heyscroft Road, Withington, Manchester M20 4UZ

## Inspection dates

13–14 July 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Many older pupils are carrying a legacy of underachievement. Weaker teaching in the past has left many with gaps in their skills and knowledge.
- Although improving, the rates of progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not swift enough to help them to reach the standards expected for their age.
- Pupils' achievement across different subjects is patchy because teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to gain the necessary skills and knowledge in subjects such as art and science.
- Teaching does not help pupils to become fluent mathematicians who can think deeply and apply their knowledge to solve problems.
- Teaching assistants are not deployed well enough to make a difference to pupils' learning. The checks on teaching are not tackling the unevenness in teaching across the school.
- Middle leaders are having too little influence on the quality of teaching across the curriculum.
- Responsibility for improvement is unequally distributed. Too much lands at the feet of one or two key people.
- The roles of those adults who lead on pupils' behaviour and safety are muddled. The systems to monitor pupils' behaviour lack rigour.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently well planned to enable pupils to build up their skills and knowledge in different subjects as they move throughout the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The early years is the flagship of the school. Children leave Reception well equipped for the challenges ahead.
- Pupils are a delight to meet. They enjoy school, behave well and feel safe.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is highly effective and sets pupils up well to be successful readers.
- Pupils' personal development is strong. They are well prepared to become valuable citizens of the future.
- Recent changes, driven by strong leadership, are turning the school around quickly. Leaders have the confidence and trust of staff, pupils and parents.

## Full report

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

- Reduce the unevenness in teaching so that different groups of pupils make stronger gains in their learning, in subjects other than English, by:
  - ensuring that teachers deepen pupils' mathematical learning, so that pupils can make links between different mathematical ideas and use their increasing knowledge to solve problems
  - supporting teachers to ensure their assessments of pupils' progress in mathematics are accurate, particularly for the most able pupils
  - reviewing how teachers deploy teaching assistants, so that these adults are able to make a greater contribution to pupils' learning, especially for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - tackling the gaps in older pupils' skills and knowledge so they can make up for time lost in the past quickly
  - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make swifter progress so that they reach the standards they should for their age and starting points
  - enabling pupils to achieve well across the whole primary curriculum by providing them with sufficient opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in subjects such as art and science.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - developing the role of middle leaders so that they have a greater influence on improving teaching, and the responsibility for improvement is shared evenly across the school
  - providing sharp feedback to teachers, following checks in the classroom, to help them improve their teaching across the curriculum
  - clarifying the roles of those adults who oversee pupils' behaviour and safety to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities fully
  - reviewing the systems for checking on behaviour and safety to ensure that leaders are able to spot any patterns across the school and to measure the positive impact of their work
  - revisiting the curriculum to ensure that it allows pupils to gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in all subjects as they move from class to class.

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

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- St Cuthbert's continues to require improvement. Despite the rapid progress since the beginning of this academic year, the school is not yet good. This is because the improvement journey got off to a slow start. The considerable turnaround in staff alongside the time taken to unearth and then untangle weak practice have all taken their toll.
- However, recent change is beginning to turn the fortunes of the school around quickly. The new headteacher, with excellent support from the deputy headteacher, is forging a clear path to a brighter future with a full head of steam. Much has been accomplished in a short space of time. Teaching is improving, pupils are enjoying their learning and their achievement is rising steadily across the school. The hard work of leaders, teachers and governors over the last year has secured the foundations for future success.
- Staff have an appetite for change because the headteacher has skilfully brought everyone together as a united team. Morale is high. Staff reflect the enthusiasm and energy of senior leaders because they have a part to play in the school's future. Everyone knows the direction of travel and all feel part of the solution to making sure pupils get the best out of their time in primary school.
- Effective systems to manage teachers' performance are raising expectations and ensuring staff have the skills to teach well. A whole host of different training opportunities are refreshing teachers' performance and helping them to learn from good practice beyond the school building.
- Checks on teaching are frequent. However, the time leaders spend visiting classrooms, talking to pupils and looking at books is not making enough difference. The feedback teachers receive is too vague. This lack of precision is not helping all to understand what they need to do to improve further.
- Middle leadership was a weakness at the last inspection. It remains so. This is not due to a lack of action but a result of staff turnaround and a restructure of responsibilities. Many leaders are new to their role and are only just getting to grips with the job at hand. They are receiving the right support to build their skills and confidence, but their influence on lifting the quality of teaching is too variable. In nurturing this new team, too much responsibility for bringing about improvement has landed on the deputy headteacher's shoulders.
- Some subject leaders are racing ahead and using the expert guidance provided by the local authority to good effect. This accounts for the improvements in teaching reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders are equally determined that pupils' academic success is matched by their social and emotional development. The systems to support pupils' wider needs have been overhauled along with every other aspect of the school. The team charged with ensuring pupils are safe, secure and well-behaved is more than willing to go the extra mile for the pupils in its care.
- A range of strategies are in place to help pupils overcome some of the challenges that get in the way of learning. However, the responsibilities each adult holds are blurred; no one has the full picture. For example, teachers keep a record of some behavioural incidents but others are kept by different leaders. Consequently, there is no clear overview of behaviour across the school which means that leaders are unable to identify patterns of behaviour or reflect on the impact of their work.
- Up until recently, the use of additional funding provided by the government to support disadvantaged pupils made scant difference. This is beginning to change. A new leader, supported by a keener interest from the governing body, has set about reviewing the extra support available to these pupils. This is leading to an improving picture in the rates of progress made by disadvantaged pupils. Nonetheless, there is still a way to go in ensuring that these pupils reach the same standards as others in the school and nationally. At present, not enough attention is given to the most able disadvantaged pupils to help them bask in success.
- Sports premium funding is being used more effectively to promote pupils' enjoyment of, and participation in, physical activity. The use of external coaches is helping to lift teachers' skills in teaching physical education as well as broaden pupils' experience of different types of physical activity. Greater involvement in competitive sports is balanced with activities such as lacrosse and ballet to give everyone a chance to keep fit and active.
- The learning programmes on offer to pupils are patchy. Some subjects, such as English, mathematics, geography and history, have a higher profile in pupils' books. In contrast, subjects such as art, science and design and technology are the poor relations. Colourful displays around the school indicate that pupils have experience of these subjects. However, the curriculum is not sufficiently well planned, or

checked rigorously enough, to make sure pupils gain subject-specific skills as they move from class to class.

- Despite this weakness, the curriculum is much livelier than it was due to the wide range of enrichment opportunities now on offer. Visits outside of school coupled with visitors and themed weeks are strengthening pupils' enjoyment of school. Furthermore, this work, along with the strong focus on Catholic values, is underpinning pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a visiting drama group developed pupils' empathy for soldiers who fought in the Battle of the Somme. During the inspection, the air crackled with excitement, awe and wonder as Year 6 pupils confidently performed their animated version of Shakespeare's plays to a packed audience of parents and pupils.
- Pupils are gaining the skills, values and attributes to make a positive contribution to modern society. Their understanding of British values is promoted well. Pupils know about other cultures and different faiths. Insights into the work of key figures, such as Martin Luther King, are shoring up their understanding of respect and tolerance for individual differences. They know the plight of people in war-torn countries. Their desire to support others who are less fortunate is evident in their generous charity work.
- **The governance of the school**
  - An external review of governance has re-energised governors. It has helped them to see where they went wrong in the past. The restructured governing body is working smartly because governors know their role and they are equipped to fulfil their responsibilities. Consequently, governors know what to ask about teaching and pupils' achievement and they understand the answers that leaders provide.
  - Governors have provided unwavering support to senior leaders over staffing issues. Difficult decisions have not been shirked. Their increasing understanding of school data means they have a better understanding of how additional government grants are being used to close achievement gaps. Governors have their sights set on the future. They are playing a key role in setting the strategic direction of the school.
  - Governors have been instrumental in setting the wheels in motion to give parents a voice. Events such as the Parents' Forum enable governors to hear first-hand what parents think about the school. They use this information well to bring about change.
  - Governors have come a long way. However, their enthusiasm for the new ways of working sometimes overshadows the attention they place on their other statutory responsibilities, such as keeping the website up to date.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Recent training means staff have the knowledge to spot early warnings of child abuse and they know what to do to act on their concerns. School records show that any worries are followed through thoroughly. Good use is made of external services to support vulnerable pupils and their families.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Although improving, the teaching that pupils experience each day remains uneven across classes, year groups and subjects. In some classrooms, children are flourishing but in others they make do. This links directly to the change-around in staffing.
- Pupils' learning is not at its best when activities lack structure or fail to build on what pupils already know and can do.
- Teaching assistants are not used to best effect across the school. In some classrooms, extra adults work in close partnership with teachers to make sure that all pupils can access learning. In others, they do not make enough difference because they are unsure of their role. In the worst-case scenario, they hamper the progress of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by providing too much support.
- The teaching of mathematics is on a journey. It is better than it was, but it still has a way to go to ensure that pupils are competent mathematicians. Positive change is showing in the breadth of mathematical topics that are being taught. Nonetheless, teachers have not grasped the fundamental aims of the new national curriculum well enough. They do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to make links between different mathematical concepts or to deepen their learning by solving problems. The assessment of pupils' achievement in mathematics is not quite right. It is often overgenerous, particularly for the most able pupils.
- In contrast, the changes to the ways in which reading and writing are taught are shining through in pupils' work. The new library signals the heightened profile that reading has in school.

- Most teachers support pupils' learning well through the productive and warm relationships they foster. Good use of humour and praise paves the way for pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are increasingly keen to throw themselves into their learning opportunities because teachers strive to make activities fun and relevant.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good. 'We are unique and beautiful; together we are a masterpiece.' These words, on display in the corridor, sum up the atmosphere in the school nicely. Children are part of a warm and caring family.
- Children take pride in their school and they are keen to contribute to its success. They take their responsibilities seriously. In acting as 'amigos', 'amigas' and school councillors they are setting a strong example in how to treat others and be valuable citizens. Pupils are confident and articulate. They are eager to share their ideas because they have a voice in school. Their views count and their suggestions are acted upon to make school a happy place.
- Different groups of pupils say they feel safe. Incidents of bullying are reducing, although name-calling still rears its ugly head now and then. Pupils recognise that everyone is different but equal. They know the harm that unkind remarks about skin colour, sexuality, faith or learning difficulties can cause. Consequently, incidents of racist and homophobic language are a rarity.
- St Cuthbert's is putting the foundations in place for pupils to make sensible choices and reap the benefits of a healthy, safe and successful life. The themed week on healthy living ensures pupils understand the harm that smoking, drugs and alcohol can cause. Older pupils gain the strategies to recognise unwanted adult attention to keep themselves safe from abuse and grooming.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is improving strongly because of the care and support from those adults who have responsibility for pupils' emotional and social needs. Pupils speak highly of this team, who take the time to listen and do their best to solve problems, whether at home or at school.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They try to do their best, they listen attentively, follow instructions and take pride in their work. Their increasingly mature attitudes to learning are making a positive contribution to their higher educational standards.
- Pupils agree that behaviour is improving. They think it is mostly good but 'not quite excellent' because they recognise that some pupils find it hard to behave well all of the time. This is true. A very small group of pupils do display unacceptable behaviour from time to time. Other pupils are amazingly tolerant. They know the root of any disruption is due to pupils' learning needs or challenging situations at home. In the past, this behaviour did disrupt learning, especially for older pupils. However, the skilled work of those adults who care for individual pupils is alleviating pressure points and allowing all to learn.
- Wide smiles, good manners and courteous behaviour greet visitors and make for a warm welcome at St Cuthbert's. The abundance of 'gold jumpers' around school indicates how well good behaviour is recognised, rewarded and respected by pupils.
- Pupils are showing their approval of recent improvements through their increasing attendance rates. In particular, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are in school more regularly than was the case in the past. Consequently, attendance levels match the national average for primary schools.
- Almost all of the parents who shared their views agree that pupils are safe and behave well, and that bullying is dealt with effectively.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- Pupils' books and school data show that pupils' achievement is moving in the right direction and strengthening over time. Improved standards at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 for those pupils currently at the school are a tell-tale sign that St Cuthbert's is on the road to recovery. In each key stage, the proportions reaching the levels for their age are as good as the national average. Across the rest of the school, standards are also rising, especially in reading and writing, because pupils are making better

progress than they did in the past. Previously, too few pupils consistently made the progress they should by the time they left Year 6.

- Despite these positive headlines, pupils' outcomes are not yet good because gaps remain between certain groups, and pupils' achievement in other subjects is patchy. Moreover, too few older pupils are making greater progress from their different starting points because weaker teaching in the past has left its mark. Improved teaching is helping them to catch up, but many continue to carry a legacy of underachievement.
- Pupils' gains in subjects other than English are uneven. Pupils are blossoming in some areas. For example, older pupils are developing the skills to speak and read Spanish. Frequent opportunities for pupils to participate in music and sport are helping them to gain a broader range of skills and excel in different areas. Elsewhere, their achievement is hit and miss. Pupils' books show that too few pupils have enough opportunity to gain scientific skills and knowledge or to design and make different products and models. Too little attention is paid to developing pupils' understanding of, and skill in, using different techniques and artistic tools.
- Pupils' creative juices are flowing more readily in English because they can write imaginatively for a range of purposes. For the most part, their work is technically accurate, well structured and a pleasure to read. Some pupils are struggling to meet this high standard because of weaknesses in their basic skills. Pupils have plenty of opportunity to hone their writing skills across other subjects. However, they tend to leave their stronger grammar, spelling and punctuation skills behind when they are not working in their English books.
- Early reading skills are fostered well so that the Year 1 phonics check has been above average for a number of years. Pupils of different abilities read fluently and with understanding. Pupils' eagerness to read for pleasure more frequently is leading to their stronger progress in this subject.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is weaker. School data shows this to be true and pupils' books confirm pupils are not gaining sufficient depth in their mathematical learning. They are becoming more competent in working out calculations due to a new whole-school approach. However, the tasks they face lack any real variation to test their understanding, make them think hard and deepen their learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils are starting to make similar progress to others in the school, but while some are surging ahead, others are being left behind in some year groups and subjects. The achievement of this group directly mirrors that of others in the school. They are faring better in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- Too little attention on the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the past left this group floundering. They made weak progress and reached low standards. This is now being tackled. Leaders have a better understanding of how well this group is achieving and which small-group sessions are best suited to pupils' different needs. This is showing early signs of success. This group are beginning to make the progress they should in most subjects. Their gains are slower in writing.
- Along with everyone else, the most able pupils are also achieving better than in the past. Across key stages 1 and 2, these pupils are building on their stronger starting points. A good number are excelling in their reading and writing skills.
- Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds and those pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress and often surpass the standards gained by their White British classmates.
- Pupils are resilient learners who are responding well to teachers' increased expectations and more challenging work. This is especially true in writing. Pupils happily accept feedback on their work, then take the time to redraft their writing to make sure it is the very best they can produce. This willingness to keep going, their enthusiasm for learning and their improved standards mean they are far better prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Early years provision

**is good**

- Opening the doors to the Nursery and Reception classrooms unveils a hive of purposeful activity and a cauldron of excitement. Children are happy, safe and captivated by everything on offer. Children's laughter is matched in equal measure by their concentration, curiosity and willingness to try their best.
- Strong leadership has taken the early years from strength to strength. Adults work together seamlessly because everyone is crystal clear about their role in supporting learning. Adults enjoy being in this area of the school as much as the children. Their enthusiasm, warm manner and high expectations create a secure, nurturing and productive environment in which children thrive. All welfare and safeguarding requirements are met.

- Information about children's progress is gathered carefully and used effectively to identify the next steps for each individual. Teaching, either through whole-class, small-group or individual work, is then carefully shaped to plug any gaps. The indoor classroom and the outdoor area are well organised to meet children's interests as well as promoting their skills and knowledge across all areas of learning. A strong focus on basic skills means that every opportunity is taken to promote early reading, writing and mathematics. For example, children happily completed, and recorded, 'M.O.T. checks' on the bicycles as part of their role play in the outdoor garage.
- The activities on offer, underpinned by strong routines, enable children to develop their personal skills well. The very youngest children take it upon themselves to dress as superheroes. They persevere with putting on their chosen outfit and they get there in the end without any adult intervention. Older children benefit from close teaching so they are doing very well as young writers. The most able happily produce sentences using adjectives, connectives and simple punctuation. Their completed work would make a Year 1 pupil proud.
- Adults are setting children on the right track for the future. They are fostering positive attitudes to learning and ensuring young children behave well. Children live up to these expectations. They follow instructions and play and work together nicely.
- Over half of the children who enter the Nursery have weaker skills and knowledge than are usually expected for their age. They typically have greater ground to cover in their reading, writing and speaking skills. However, they catch up quickly and almost all make good or better progress from this point onwards. Consequently, standards at the end of Reception are following an upward trend. This year, the proportion of children gaining a good level of development surpassed the national average. The time in the early years helps children to make a swift start when they reach Year 1.
- Over time, boys and disadvantaged children have not done as well as others in the school or nationally. Targeted and effective teaching, plus good use of additional funding, is reversing this pattern quickly. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in school halved this year and far more boys are ready for the next stage of their journey.
- Increasing opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning are leading to positive partnerships. Parents are able to 'stay and play' in classrooms, attend different workshops and to keep track of children's progress through the information which is sent home each half term.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105553
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection Number</b>	10012160

This inspection 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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	341
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rebecca Kennedy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dominic Mulcahy
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 445 6079
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-cuthberts.manchester.sch.uk">www.st-cuthberts.manchester.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@st-cuthberts.manchester.sch.uk">admin@st-cuthberts.manchester.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1–2 May 2014

## Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average, as is the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support through the pupil premium funding is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum standards and rates of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in key stage 2.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable staffing changes. A new headteacher took up post in September 2015. The deputy headteacher took up her substantive post in May 2015. The leadership team has been restructured.
- The school meets the requirements for publishing information on its website.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited each classroom to observe teaching and pupils' learning. Three of these lesson observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- They observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play. Inspectors met formally with six groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, middle leaders, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of school information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a small group of parents at the start of the school day. They also considered the 77 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), including 31 free-text comments.

## Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jonathan Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Parker	Ofsted Inspector

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