

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School

Stratford Road, Hartlepool TS25 5AJ

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, through her commitment, vision and imagination, has led sustained improvement in the leadership of the school and the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have created an inclusive culture that has high expectations of staff and pupils. Leaders, teachers and other adults work as a highly effective team.
- Governors are actively involved in the life of the school. They understand and are fully committed to their role in improving the quality of education and they hold leaders to account for the standards pupils achieve.
- Strong leadership of the early years, stimulating resources and high-quality teaching ensure that children in this phase make good progress. A small number of children with English as an additional language make slower progress because they initially find it difficult to communicate.
- Pupils and their families are inspired to read often. Pupils enjoy reading and they make rapid progress in key stage 1 because of the effective teaching of phonics.
- On occasion, pupils struggle to understand how to improve their work because the guidance they receive is not precise enough.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are now good. This is due to systematic and wide-ranging checking by leaders. Not all staff make the best use of assessment information to plan work that is appropriately matched to the needs and abilities of pupils.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve challenging problems.
- Pupils across the school, including those who are disadvantaged, are currently making strong progress in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects including French, music and physical education (PE).
- Pupils' attitudes to school are positive and they are keen to learn. They respond to the high standards expected of their behaviour and show care and respect for each other. During the inspection, pupils were well mannered, polite and considerate.
- The nurturing, caring ethos is striking in all aspects of school life. Pupils have a profound understanding of their own spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Imaginative systems for improving pupils' punctuality and reducing persistent absence have been successful. Attendance is now around the national average and pupils are rarely late for school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take action to further improve outcomes for pupils in all year groups by ensuring that:
 - teachers and other adults make more use of assessment information to plan work that is appropriately matched to the needs and abilities of pupils
 - pupils, particularly those who are less able, receive clear guidance to enable them to accelerate their progress in lessons
 - teachers maximise opportunities for deeper learning in mathematics by providing more opportunities for pupils to solve more challenging problems.
- Provide more timely support for those children in the early years who find it difficult to communicate in English when they join the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's unwavering drive and commitment to raising standards has led to rapid positive improvements in the quality of teaching following an unsettled period with many staffing changes. She has gained the confidence of staff, parents, carers and pupils, who fully support her relentless drive for excellence. As a result, all areas of the school's work continue to improve. Staff morale is high and they are very proud to be members of the school. They say that it is 'a fantastic place to work'.
- The deputy headteacher is adding her expertise and constant enthusiasm to a committed and experienced leadership team. Teachers and other adults are appreciative of the efforts the deputy headteacher has put into helping them improve their teaching through coaching, training and support, including that from partner schools within the local authority. Teachers who are new to the profession are particularly well supported by the school.
- The senior team lead by example. They have established a culture of high expectation, and staff work as a cohesive and effective team. Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibility and lines of accountability based on Christian values.
- Senior leaders and governors have created a fully inclusive school where all pupils are made to feel secure, valued and supported to achieve their best. This strengthens further the school's aspirations for pupils' academic and personal development and the strong capacity for continued improvement.
- Rigorous performance management drives improvements in teaching and learning. Subject leaders have excellent knowledge and understanding of the subjects they lead. They work closely together to ensure consistency in their approach to monitoring the quality of teaching. They accurately identify how well teachers and teaching assistants are doing and they provide a range of high-quality training to equip staff with additional skills. Leaders are encouraged to gain additional qualifications to further strengthen their expertise.
- Robust and regular checks are made by leaders and governors to determine how well pupils are doing. Monitoring of the performance of those who join the school during the academic year, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged is particularly rigorous. There is clear evidence to demonstrate the benefit of the highly effective, personalised support provided for these pupils. By the end of Year 6, pupils are confident and articulate and are well prepared for the next stage in their education
- The curriculum is effective in meeting pupils' needs and rapidly improving their basic skills. It is enriched by opportunities for pupils to participate in exciting and memorable creative, musical and sporting activities which promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Inspectors found no evidence of discrimination in this school. Pupils have a profound understanding of the diverse nature of the community within which they live. The development of pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is at the very heart

of the school's work, evidenced clearly by the weekly 'statement to live by'.

- Pupils demonstrate pride about and sensitivity towards each other's differences which they study within their lessons, assemblies and through their collective worship. They also take part in visits and enrichment activities to secure their understanding of these values.
- The school uses the PE and sport premium funding for primary schools well to increase the number of sports taught, and to improve the teaching of PE. This contributes successfully to increasing pupils' enjoyment of school and developing their understanding about how to be fit and lead healthy lives. The sports coach has led the school to many successes in school sports competitions including football, netball, athletics and dodgeball.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear understanding of their strategic roles and responsibilities in implementing the school's improvement plans. They are committed to the success of pupils and are thoughtful about their role in ensuring that success. For example, when, after the last inspection, it became clear that they did not have the necessary skills to address the increased requirements of governance confidently, they recruited new governors and increased their collective set of skills. Consequently, governors' educational knowledge and active involvement in the work of the school enable them to challenge leaders robustly, particularly about the progress all pupils are making.
- Governors have supported the leaders well with the challenge of recruiting staff. They recognise the effective support senior staff give to new teachers. As a result, they talk confidently about the improvements in teaching and the well-considered training these teachers receive. Together with the leadership team, they have created a culture of high aspirations.
- Governors are knowledgeable about how additional government funding is used to improve the progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. They challenge the school appropriately to ensure that the PE and sport premium funding is used effectively.
- Governors ensure that policies relating to pay progression for staff are fully adhered to and that movement up the pay scale for teachers relates to outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school, including in the early years. Pupils are kept safe and they feel safe. Pupils spoken to by inspectors said that they know who they should go to if they have a concern.
- Arrangements for recruitment and safeguarding training are secure. There are good systems in place for working with the local authority and parents to support vulnerable children. The school acts as a strong advocate for children to secure timely intervention by specialist agencies.
- Governors are well trained in the recent safeguarding requirements. They have a clear

understanding of their statutory duties. The safeguarding governor ensures that the school's safeguarding records are fit for purpose.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have worked effectively with new teachers to set high expectations for classroom practice. More experienced teachers are successfully supporting those who are new to the profession. As a result, teaching across the school is good.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are dedicated, enthusiastic and hardworking. They have high expectations of their pupils, which promote their good attitudes to learning from the moment they join the school. The attractive and well-presented classrooms demonstrate that staff lead by example to promote positive learning behaviour for pupils.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in English as a result of the consistently high-quality teaching they receive. The teaching is planned carefully to meet pupils' needs. Pupils are encouraged to think hard about their work. Pupils are enthusiastic about their literacy lessons. Teachers try hard to ensure that pupils correct and redraft their work in the light of the advice they have received, which ensures further improvement in their writing, spelling and grammar.
- Generally, pupils enjoy their mathematics. Their progress in mathematics is improving rapidly, as demonstrated by their positive outcomes in 2016. Teachers know their subject well and they use questioning effectively to tease out pupils' understanding of mathematics. Pupils typically show sustained levels of concentration and perseverance in mathematics. Some tasks do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to reason mathematically and as a result, they have fewer opportunities to consider how to apply their knowledge to solve challenging problems.
- Teachers plan well for the most able pupils and as a result they make good progress. Teachers ensure that most-able pupils are challenged during lessons. In mathematics, for example, pupils are expected to complete extension activities to deepen their understanding. In reading, the most able pupils are guided by their teacher to select more advanced books.
- The verbal interaction between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils is overwhelmingly positive. Pupils generally make appropriate corrections to improve their work in response to the comments from teachers. There are times, however, when pupils are not clear about how to improve their work because the guidance they receive is not precise enough. On these occasions, pupils who are less able struggle to understand what they need to do to make rapid progress.
- Pupils say they enjoy reading and they have plentiful opportunities to read to adults in school and in the stimulating library areas. The promotion of a love of reading is strong because of the innovative ways used by leaders to encourage pupils and their families to read often. For example, those pupils who demonstrate improvement in their reading mysteriously receive the gift of a book from the 'book wizard'; parents provide positive feedback to the school following the 'bedtime reading' evenings, during which they observe teachers reading to their children.

- The teaching of phonics is improving strongly and is highly effective. There is consistency in the quality of the teaching of phonics in the early years and in key stage 1. Pupils are gaining in confidence in their use and application of their phonics knowledge and they use this well to tackle unfamiliar words in their reading and writing. Boys' attainment in reading is rapidly catching up with that of girls in year groups where this had previously been a concern.
- Work in pupils' 'Shine' books and on display in classrooms demonstrates innovative and interesting approaches by teachers in a range of subjects. In a stimulating and fun-filled music lesson observed, pupils in Year 2 rapidly improved their skills in keeping a beat by acting as 'beat catchers' and watching their teacher 'like a hawk'. Pupils were excited, highly motivated and productive. They concentrated diligently to create accurate rhythms above the standard expected of them.
- Leaders' monitoring and tracking of pupils' outcomes is now robust, rigorous and informative. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that accurate assessment information is used well by teachers to plan learning according to the individual needs of pupils. Joint observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrate that increasingly, staff do make good use of this information. However, inconsistencies remain in a few classes where work is occasionally too hard or too easy for pupils.
- The homework set by teachers is used well to consolidate the learning that takes place at school. The school has worked hard to encourage greater participation of parents and most parents do value these opportunities to contribute more to their children's learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- This is an inclusive school where pupils feel valued and respected. Pupils are polite and very caring. They say that they feel safe and secure and they benefit enormously from the praise and rewards that are given frequently by all staff.
- Opportunities for pupils to have a say and make decisions are plentiful. Pupils are very proud of their school. Older pupils take their role as play leaders for the youngest pupils very seriously and this demonstrates their caring attitude towards one another. Members of the school council group are keen to take on extra responsibilities, represent the views of their classmates and make decisions to help to improve their school and raise money for charities.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in and around the school, as well as online. They have faith that adults in the school will address those very rare occasions of bullying that arise. Pupils can explain accurately and confidently how to keep themselves healthy. They enjoy the opportunity to take part in a wide range of physical activities at playtimes and particularly those organised by the sports coach during lunchtimes.
- The school's work in religious education (RE) has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to and respect for one another. Leaders and staff take pupils' spiritual and emotional

well-being very seriously. They make sure that the school is a safe and harmonious place, where pupils develop a strong awareness of their own identity and respect the similarities and differences in others. A Year 2 pupil said, 'It doesn't matter if people are different on the outside because we are all the same inside.' Leaders ensure that they prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain and the links with other countries and cultures are strong.

- Pupils and parents speak highly of the pastoral care and welfare support offered by the school. They value the opportunity to meet with the parent support adviser who is at the school gate every morning. One parent said, 'The support from the school is phenomenal and I cannot fault it at all.'
- The school's work with outside agencies is very strong. Leaders invest heavily in additional care and support to fully address the learning and welfare needs of pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. For example, the 'believe and achieve' and 'rainbow' nurture groups are used effectively to ensure that pupils' personal circumstances do not have a negative impact on their learning.
- This school is a vibrant, happy place where pupils learn much about themselves and others. This results in a better understanding of each other and contributes to the very strong spiritual and community ethos across the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils work hard to achieve 'golden box' rewards for all aspects of their learning, attendance and behaviour. Attendance continues to improve and is now close to that seen nationally. Rigorous strategies are in place to tackle absences, and staff work hard to involve other professionals whenever necessary.
- The headteacher and parent support adviser design highly successful ways to improve the punctuality and attendance of individual pupils, such as 'beat the bell'. The recent attendance challenge posed by the headteacher in a unique letter to each pupil, resulted in seven weeks of no absence as pupils competed to be rewarded with highly sought-after Easter eggs.
- The school's relationship with parents has been strengthened since the last inspection. Parents value the numerous opportunities for them to understand and contribute to their children's learning, particularly in the early years.
- There are occasions when the rate of progress of a few pupils slows because they lose concentration as a result of work not being at the most appropriate level for them.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In the last two years, effective teaching and an ambitious school culture have changed the pattern of attainment in the school. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils attained the highest standards in reading and writing in 2016 and an above-average proportion of Year 6 pupils met the targets expected of them in mathematics
- Leaders recognised, however, that too few pupils reached the expected standards in

reading, writing and mathematics combined. As a result of high-quality training, teachers have developed a better understanding of how to improve pupils' reading and writing skills. Consequently, pupils are now making rapid progress in English.

- In 2016, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who attained the expected standard in the phonics screening check was high, reflecting the school's effective approach to phonics teaching. Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1, however, were below those expected, particularly for boys. Leaders acted immediately to determine the reasons for this and introduced strategies which have brought about rapid improvement in the quality of teaching. The work the school has done to develop boys' reading skills has been particularly successful. Those who read to inspectors did so accurately, confidently and fluently.
- Highly effective teaching and regular monitoring of pupils' progress are enabling more of them to make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics than at the time of the last inspection.
- Funding to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities results in pupils making good progress from their starting points across the school. They receive skilled, additional support which is effectively managed to ensure its effectiveness. All staff know how to meet the needs of this group of pupils, and teachers are held to account for their progress.
- A high proportion of the school's pupils are disadvantaged. Leaders rigorously plan and check on the additional academic support funded by the pupil premium to ensure that it has a positive impact on the welfare and progress of eligible pupils. Published results, information supplied by leaders and inspection evidence all show that their progress is improving in line with that of other pupils in the school. However, their progress generally remains below that of other pupils nationally, reflecting the complexity of the needs of this group of pupils.
- Across the school, the most able pupils are now making at least good progress, particularly in English. An analysis of work showed that they are being challenged more often than at the time of the last inspection. As a result, they are deepening their understanding and are working hard to reach the very highest standards.
- In several subjects, the expertise of the specialist teachers, for example in PE, RE, art and music, is enabling pupils to learn very well in these subjects. This and pupils' positive attitudes to learning prepare them well for secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is highly effective and has improved since the time of the last inspection. The leader has a precise understanding of the quality of provision and ensures that it is adapted in accordance with the diverse needs of children.
- Children join the Nursery and enter the Reception classes at various times during the school year. Their starting points are below those expected for their age. An increasing proportion of children have limited language skills and leaders rapidly identify those children who need additional support, drawing effectively on the assistance of other professionals when necessary.

- Since the last inspection, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has improved and in 2016, it remained in line with the national average. This reflects the very low starting points of a small group of children whose skills and lack of self-confidence made it difficult for them to embark on key stage 1. Careful nurturing of this group, combined with effective teaching, is ensuring that they are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- A careful scrutiny of the records of children's work and observations made by staff during the inspection showed that children are making rapid progress, with many achieving very well from low starting points.
- Staff rapidly establish effective routines. Children are happy, polite and they behave extremely well. Boys and girls work very well together and they are respectful of and kind to one another. Adults interact well with children, providing positive models of speaking and listening. A small number of children with English as an additional language do not always settle quickly because they find it difficult to communicate with staff and other children, and this slows their progress.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Staff have high expectations for what children can achieve, and challenge them effectively to develop early skills in literacy and numeracy. Effective teaching, including in phonics, enables children to rapidly improve their ability to read and write words and sentences.
- Children benefit greatly from a high-quality learning environment, particularly the stimulating outdoor area, which has been totally refurbished since the last inspection. Adults make excellent use of these resources in designing exciting activities which stimulate and extend children's learning. The skilled questioning of one teacher quickly identified improvements in children's language, physical, social and emotional development as, dressed as pirates, they eagerly hunted for treasure where 'X marked the spot'.
- The leader of early years ensures that similar activities promote children's development in all key areas of learning, and represent highly appropriate next steps for each child. Staff record a wide range of evidence to help them judge children's progress accurately and this is rigorously reviewed by the leader.
- The early years staff develop strong relationships with parents and provide many opportunities for them to be actively involved in their child's learning. This includes the growing number of parents choosing to attend the school's weekly toddler group within the nursery setting.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 111692 |
| Local authority | Hartlepool |
| Inspection number | 10031967 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 290 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Karen Merifield |
| Headteacher | Joanne Wilson |
| Telephone number | 01429 275 040 |
| Website | www.stcuthbertsschool.org.uk |
| Email address | admin@stcuthbertsschool.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- There have been significant changes in staff since the previous inspection.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in

line with the national figures.

- 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 group.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards (the minimum expected of pupils' attainment and progress).
- The school provides out-of-school care in the form of an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook a series of short, focused visits to classrooms and longer lesson observations in each year group. A number of these were conducted jointly with the senior leaders.
- Inspectors visited the school's after-school club.
- Formal and informal discussions took place with senior leaders, including governors, subject leaders, pupils, parents and a representative from the local authority.
- Documentation relating to the school's website and safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks, was scrutinised.
- The schools' self-evaluation, plans for improvement and analysis of pupils' attainment and progress were evaluated.
- Pupils' work in different subjects was scrutinised alongside senior and middle leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes was observed by inspectors.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read individually.
- Inspectors took into account the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, five pupil responses and 24 staff responses to the online survey.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Cathy Morgan, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Mark Dent | Ofsted Inspector |
| Dawn Foster | Ofsted Inspector |

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