

St Cuthbert's CofE Junior School

Keward Avenue, Wells, Somerset BA5 1TS

Inspection dates

14–15 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Despite ongoing and considerable improvements, the quality of teaching is not consistently good across the full range of year groups and subjects.
- Teaching is not improving pupils' writing and mathematical skills quickly enough from pupils' different starting points.
- The legacy of underachievement is still affecting the outcomes of some groups of pupils, including the attainment of the most able and of disadvantaged pupils in writing and mathematics.
- Although leaders use assessment information to hold teachers to account, this lacks the precision needed to ensure rapid progress for pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently enable pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills. Consequently, pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills are not strong. Pupils lack the confidence to apply their knowledge to a range of mathematical situations.
- Teachers are slow in identifying errors and challenging pupils to improve basic spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in writing. As a result, pupils' attainment in writing is still lower than it should be.
- Teachers do not plan, respond and adapt quickly enough to pupils' individual needs, especially in developing key writing and mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- Following a significant decline since the previous inspection, school leaders are taking effective action to strongly and rapidly improve teaching, learning and assessment in the school.
- Pupils' reading skills are improving well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They take pride in their school and enjoy the range of responsibilities they are given.
- Governors have made effective appointments to a number of key leadership posts which are having a discernible impact on teaching and learning across the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan, check and adapt work to fully meet the different needs of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils
 - enable pupils to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge through a range of high-quality problem-solving and reasoning activities
 - improve pupils' understanding and application of spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in writing.
- Further strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management so that assessment information is used with greater precision in holding teachers to account for pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment in April 2015 the new headteacher has reversed a significant decline in the school's performance. The quality of teaching and learning in the school is now improving rapidly towards being good. The headteacher has built an effective leadership team to provide essential support and challenge alongside her, and this is now having a positive impact.
- The headteacher has high expectations and a clear vision for improvement which pupils, staff, parents and governors understand and support. As a result, expectations of what the pupils can achieve are now realistically challenging across the school and leading to sustainable improvement in their outcomes.
- The newly appointed deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and chair of governors have forged a strong tier of leadership which is scrupulous, especially in checking teaching and holding others to account. They have been effective in starting to raise standards and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The headteacher checks the quality of teaching and has taken strong action to improve when weaknesses have been identified. Individual plans are used well to support teachers, including newly qualified teachers, in making the necessary amendments or adjustments to their practice. Consequently, the quality of teaching across the school is improving rapidly.
- Leaders implement effective accountability systems, including the management of staff performance. These are a well-established part of the school's approach to improving teaching and learning. As a result, teachers and teaching assistants are well supported and challenged to improve their practice.
- School leaders' self-evaluation is accurate. They use this to draft and implement rigorous plans to secure improvement. As a result, there is clear improvement in key areas of underperformance, such as writing.
- School leaders are implementing effective professional development and training. This is well targeted to meet the needs of staff. For example, teachers' and teaching assistants' recent training is enabling them to run effective mathematics and reading interventions.
- School leaders are using well-considered strategies to tackle weaknesses in the school's performance. For example, the implementation of a teaching sequence and approach to writing is enabling pupils to write more fluently and purposefully.
- School leaders promote equality and pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development through a range of relevant and purposeful activities. For example, pupils undertake responsibilities such as 'door monitors' in Year 6 or prefects in Year 5. These provide genuine responsibilities which pupils enjoy and take very seriously as they help in the daily running of the school.
- Parents are widely supportive of the school and recognise the improvements being made over time. One parent, whose view was typical, wrote 'I have been delighted

with the difference the staff at this school have made for my son's education ... the head and staff deserve recognition for the wonderful work they are doing. They are not just educating children, they are enriching their lives on so many personal levels too.'

- School leaders consult with parents and respond to their views. For example, homework has been modified following a questionnaire in May 2016. This has been well received, particularly by the pupils, who prefer the approach now taken by the school.
- School leaders ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum is supporting the drive to raise standards. In particular, wider enrichment opportunities, including a breakfast and gardening club, provide pupils with opportunities to integrate and enhance their social and emotional development. However, some strategies to support pupils' well-being are not sufficiently focused on pupils' wider academic achievement.
- Leaders' records of monitoring teaching show how these are being used to secure improvement. However, the focus is often on teaching activities as opposed to finding out what children know, can do and understand. As a consequence, leaders do not have a fully accurate view of the rates of pupils' progress from their starting points.
- Leaders and teachers use assessment information appropriately. They regularly meet and review pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, agreed plans which outline intended support for pupils are often too vague; for example, targets include 'improve grammar'. This lack of detail means that teachers and pupils are not clear about critical milestones or measures to improve pupils' progress.
- School leaders use the sport premium appropriately to support pupils in wider participation and enjoyment of daily physical activities. For example, a qualified external coach is employed to work across the school for all classes. Funds also contribute towards pupils' participation in various sporting festivals and events. This is increasing the numbers of pupils being active and igniting a desire for pupils to get involved in sport.
- Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those in receipt of the pupil premium grant, is used to target extra support and interventions. However, this aspect of the school's work does not yet have a consistently positive impact on improving pupils' academic achievement.
- The local authority and purchased consultancy have provided appropriate support and challenge. In particular, the focus on strategies for improving teaching and learning in the classroom has enabled teachers to steadily improve their practice.

Governance of the school

- Governors recognise that standards in the school have been too low over a prolonged period of time. As a result, they have made key leadership appointments which are contributing to the current improvements being seen across the school. Governors work effectively with the headteacher and other leaders to increase accountability. For example, leaders are required to submit reports to governors, who interrogate them, and there are now probing questions in committee meetings.
- The most significant change has been the appointment of the new chair of governors in September 2016. Her passion and commitment have been instrumental in improving

the work of the governing body and galvanising their attitudes and approaches towards school improvement.

- Governors visit the school to check on key aspects of the school's performance, for example safeguarding and English. This is supporting governors to have an accurate first-hand knowledge of the work of the school.
- The governing body has been restructured. The new committee that is focused on teaching and learning is now asking pertinent questions of leaders so that leaders are held fully to account for the impact of their work to secure improvement.
- Governors have clear roles and responsibilities which are aligned to improvement areas of the school development plan. These are followed up by individual governors' visits and through probing questioning in the relevant teaching and learning committee. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the impact of reading, writing and mathematics initiatives.
- Governors have a strategy for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They ask leaders about disadvantaged pupils and track their progress against other groups. However, there is limited information about sub-groups of pupils, such as the most able disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe through rigorous and robust procedures, including vetting and pre-employment checks for all staff. Leaders are thorough when appointing and training staff. As a result, all staff have a secure understanding of what to do, and how to support pupils appropriately in a range of safeguarding and child protection situations.
- School staff know who the designated safeguarding officers are. Currently, the school has three leaders trained to meet this requirement with a further member of staff due to be trained.
- School staff are meticulous in checking on the welfare of pupils. Leaders take responsibility to refer and challenge other professional agencies in the best interests of pupils. Leaders are tenacious and work effectively with other services to keep children safe.
- Pupils affirm that they feel safe and well cared for. They know how to stay safe, and take responsibility, in a variety of situations, including on the internet and in relation to bullying, including online bullying, and fire safety.
- Staff have established a culture of trust which supports pupils in sharing any concerns or worries, such as through the 'worry box' where pupils can refer their worries or anxieties. Additional support through the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) provides pupils with a further avenue to feel safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not ensure that pupils are sufficiently challenged to make consistently good progress, especially in writing and mathematics. However, following a significant decline in standards the quality of teaching across the school is improving.
- Teachers do not check, review and adapt work well enough for the different needs of pupils. They are not consistently challenged to use and apply their skills in a range of new and interesting contexts. This is particularly evident in the lack of challenge for the most able pupils.
- Teachers' weak subject knowledge limits pupils' understanding in terms of knowing when and how to apply their mathematical skills in a range of contexts and situations. As a result, pupils lack confidence to reason or to try out their ideas to solve problems.
- Teachers do not routinely identify or challenge weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Consequently, these elements of their writing continue to be a weakness and a barrier to pupils meeting the standards expected of them.
- The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities often focuses too strongly on behavioural and emotional barriers, without sufficient attention to supporting pupils academically. Consequently, pupils spend insufficient time meeting their academic needs. This slows the progress they are making in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is variable, with inconsistencies in strengths between different year groups and classes. Consequently, pupils make varying degrees of progress across the school. For example, pupils in Year 6 catch up well in reading, writing and mathematics because of the high expectations and persistent challenge in these lessons.
- The introduction of specific teaching approaches and strategies, especially since September 2016, is supporting pupils well. These have included an approach to writing which is enabling pupils of all abilities to write for sustained periods of time with greater structure. Pupils are also now being taught how to successfully edit, redraft and improve pieces of writing.
- A new approach to the teaching of reading, coupled with tailored interventions for phonics, is helping pupils in Years 3 and 4 to catch up and read with increasing fluency.
- Teaching assistants are widely and effectively deployed to deliver key interventions, including in mathematics, reading and writing. Pupils enjoy these sessions and are gaining confidence and competence in basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are gaining confidence in expressing themselves and are encouraged to share their ideas and thoughts during lessons and at other times in the school day. They listen to each other and typically show respect and consideration towards one another.

- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and respect the school's rules. Pupils understand the Christian values and principles that act as a guide to behaviour in the school.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities, such as door monitor and prefect roles, which play an important and distinctive part in the running and order of the school. Pupils respect their peers who hold these positions and understand how they are important in maintaining order.
- Pupils show a willingness to support others and help with fund-raising and charities, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Pupils show empathy and understanding to others in a range of different situations and backgrounds.
- The learning behaviour of some pupils in lessons can distract others. There is a very small minority of pupils who are currently causing some concern to other pupils. However, the ELSA, teachers and teaching assistants are well trained and adept in responding to any situations and reducing the impact of these pupils on those around them.
- Pupils' work in their books, particularly their workbooks, sometimes shows a lack of pride, especially in handwriting and presentation. Teachers do not always challenge this appropriately.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils use the school environment in a busy and purposeful manner, especially as there is frequently a range of interventions and small-group work taking place across the school day. Generally, pupils behave well around the school, and when sharing spaces and corridors do not disturb or interfere with others. As a result, pupils learn purposefully around the school.
- Pupils have confidence in the staff. Revisions and amendments to the school's behaviour policy ensure that behaviour management is always evolving to suit the pupils' ongoing needs. As a result, pupils' needs are continually being met, including those of pupils who have the most challenging behaviour and emotional needs.
- Staff cater well for pupils who have complex and additional behavioural needs, for example through specific nurture and support work. The pupils value this and appreciate the difference it makes for them.
- Pupils feel that bullying is rare. If it does happen, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by school staff.
- School leaders tackle attendance matters directly and effectively with parents. They use a range of strategies to raise awareness of why it is essential to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. As a result, there has been a strong improvement in the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities during the academic year. Furthermore, the number of pupils who have persistently high absence has fallen sharply since September 2016. The overall attendance figure is now marginally below the national average, although leaders are aware that they must continue to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016 the school's performance in key stage 2 tests was unacceptably low, especially in pupils' rates of progress in writing and mathematics. Since then, the concerted effort of staff has started to raise standards.
- Standards across the school are not yet good enough. Pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is still generally below that of their national counterparts, especially in Years 3 to 5. However, there is evidence of strong improvement in key areas, which is now ensuring that pupils are better placed for the next stage in their learning.
- Pupils' general calculation and number skills are secure and are developed appropriately across the school for middle-attaining pupils and the most able pupils. However, lower-attaining pupils still require much support to be able to understand basic arithmetic skills, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils' writing skills are improving, for example in length, depth and structure, across the school. There are some very strong examples of writing across the school, for example in Years 4 and 6. However, pupils' writing is still typically weak in the application of punctuation, spelling and grammar to ensure fluency and meaning in writing.
- The transference of skills across subjects is weak. For example, pupils do not maintain the same standards in writing, evident in English work, in topic work or science. As a result, pupils are not being challenged to adapt or apply skills meaningfully and independently in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making similar rates of progress to all other pupils. However, this is inconsistent in Years 3 to 5, especially for the most able pupils who are not yet being challenged to reach the standards they are capable of.
- The proportion of pupils now meeting the higher standards by the end of Year 6 is improving rapidly, despite too much variability in other year groups.
- The new SENCo is tracking pupils more rigorously than in the previous year. Recent interventions and strategies are showing that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now catching up. However, some pupils make slower rates of progress from their starting points, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' reading skills are improving well across the school. They are able to use a range of strategies, including phonics in the lower years, which is helping lower-ability pupils to catch up. In addition, the most able pupils enjoy reading and are able to deduce and infer complex meanings from a variety of texts by the time they leave Year 6.
- Pupils in Year 6 are making rapid gains in reading, writing and mathematics. They now ably demonstrate the full range of skills needed to meet national expectations in these subjects. There has been a sharp rise in the proportion of pupils who are capable of meeting the higher standards in national tests.

School details

Unique reference number	123777
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10005552

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine McCulloch
Headteacher	Helen Mullinger
Telephone number	01749 678066
Website	www.stcuthbertsjuniorswells.co.uk
Email address	sch.396@educ.somerset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 July 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards (the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics).
- The school is directly adjacent to the separate infant school and is continuing to build stronger links with staff and governors there as its main feeder school.
- The school has separate classes in each year group. There is an additional nurture group for pupils in Year 3.
- The number on the roll makes this school smaller than the average primary.
- There is a similar proportion of girls and boys in the school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the additional grant for disadvantaged pupils is

greater than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of those who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average but increasing rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and were often accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, as well as with the mathematics and English subject leaders. Other meetings were held with the SENCo, ELSA and representatives of the school's governing body.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the school's consultant for school improvement.
- The inspectors scrutinised a number of documents including the governing body's records of visits, assessment information, the summary self-evaluation, the school development plan, anonymised performance management records and evidence relating to safer recruitment, training and child protection.
- Most visits to classrooms were conducted through accompanied learning walks. The lead inspector also conducted an observation in a Year 6 physical education lesson.
- The lead inspector undertook detailed scrutiny of pupils' books in Year 6 to evaluate the quality of work and check the accuracy of assessment information held by the school in writing and mathematics. Additional workbook scrutiny for Years 3 to 5 was conducted to analyse and evaluate standards, progress and skills in writing and mathematics.
- Children spoke to inspectors during various activities throughout the inspection. In addition, inspectors met with a group of pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, and listened to them read in both the lower and upper school.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at playtime and lunch.
- The 27 responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and accompanying free-text comments, were taken into account. The lead inspector also considered the views of 14 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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