

# St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Berwick

Prince Edward Road, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2EX

## Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Under the strong leadership of the new headteacher and governors, the school has improved continuously since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are proud of their school and recognise improvements made, saying 'our lessons are much better now and we learn more every day'.
- Leaders and staff share a determination to eliminate underachievement and to ensure high expectations. Even so, performance targets set for teachers do not link well enough to outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils' outcomes are good across the whole curriculum. Current pupils make swift progress. A large majority of pupils achieve the expected standards for their age in mathematics and writing. However, fewer pupils work at the higher standard in these subjects.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is extremely high. This is because leaders have changed the way reading is organised across the school. Staff teach the skills of reading most effectively and large proportions of pupils work at greater depth in reading compared to pupils nationally. Most-able pupils read challenging books that develop their wider general knowledge well.
- Teachers and assistants give lots of feedback to their pupils during lessons. Staff intervene quickly if they spot any errors or misconceptions. This sensitive guidance helps pupils learn from their mistakes.
- Middle leaders understand their roles in school and monitor outcomes carefully to support the good progress made in different subjects.
- Governors make sure that money spent on disadvantaged pupils supports their high achievement. Similarly, governors also ensure that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make strong progress too.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and show respect for all staff in school. Teachers create positive relationships in classrooms and pupils cooperate sensibly and with maturity.
- Children get off to a good start with learning in the early years. Standards are much higher at the end of Reception now than in previous years and staff prepare pupils well for Year 1. Pupils' phonics skills are improving because teaching is more precise and targeted at different abilities.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that targets set in teachers' performance management are aimed more precisely at improving outcomes for specific groups of pupils across the school
  - setting more specific targets for the group of pupils expected to reach greater depth in mathematics and writing.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics and writing by:
  - making sure that a higher proportion of pupils work at greater depth in these subjects
  - developing systems to promote consistency in the teaching of spelling across the school and improving the quality of writing in pupils' topic books
  - ensuring that pupils have frequent opportunities to solve mathematical problems, choosing which calculations are best suited to particular tasks and exploring their own methods to investigate possible solutions.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The resilient and capable headteacher has worked closely with governors to address all of the concerns raised in the previous inspection. All staff and governors now share the same high aspirations for their pupils and are fully committed to the school's continued improvement.
- Leaders monitor and analyse the school's work very closely. They evaluate assessment information accurately and create purposeful plans for the future. Leaders know the school's strengths and now tackle any areas for development with greater speed, frequency and determination.
- Middle leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. They follow a well-planned programme of lesson observation and work scrutiny to give their colleagues timely and useful feedback. They have a good grasp of what still needs to be done to improve even further. For example, leaders in geography and history know that work in pupils' topic books is not yet reaching the same high standards as that seen in pupils' English books, and have plans to address this.
- Leaders follow clear systems to review each teacher's performance annually. However, the targets set for teachers do not link specifically to the progress that leaders expect different groups of pupils to make in each subject. At times, targets focus too much on the proportion of pupils who will make the expected progress and not enough on the proportion of pupils who will reach even higher standards in writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders ensure that the knowledge, skills and experiences on offer match pupils' needs. The curriculum provides pupils with a good grasp of local knowledge but also helps them understand life in the wider world beyond Berwick. For younger pupils, visits include a trip to the nearby mail delivery office, while older pupils learn in depth about the world's rainforests.
- Leaders share a clear vision of how important the wider curriculum is to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils experience a range of visits and welcome many visitors to the school to enhance their learning. For example, the local bishop visited to officially open the school's new prayer garden designed by pupils. In art, pupils are inspired to paint their own very effective landscapes of Berwick after following the Lowry trail around their town.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to provide both academic and emotional support for disadvantaged pupils. They identified, for example, that some disadvantaged pupils need vocabulary enrichment and introduced effective teaching strategies to improve this aspect of learning in all subjects.
- The school is highly inclusive. Leaders ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. Leaders use funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities most effectively to provide individual and group support whenever needed. Teachers and assistants support pupils particularly well, providing work at a variety of levels to match each pupil's specific needs.
- Leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding

successfully. They employ specialist sports coaches to build up teachers' skills and knowledge in PE. The funding provides a wider variety of sports and increases the numbers of pupils engaging in PE after school.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors understand their roles and responsibilities well. They bring many professional skills and a wide range of experience to enhance their impact on school improvement. Governors hold regular steering group meetings to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They question leaders thoughtfully to ensure that the correct priorities are set and hold leaders to account for the progress made by pupils. Governors audit their skills and knowledge frequently to plan future training and fill any gaps in their expertise.
- Governors develop good relationships with staff in school and ensure that effective training opportunities support new initiatives. Minutes of meetings show the increased challenge governors give to senior and middle leaders. Governors make difficult decisions astutely to improve the school's financial efficiency, such as a recent staffing restructuring to provide better value for money.
- The governing body staffing committee meets annually to consider any evidence that supports teachers' pay awards.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors regularly check the school's record of statutory checks on the suitability of adults in school to work with children. The designated safeguarding governor ensures that leaders carry out recruitment and vetting procedures correctly. Governors monitor that records are precise and confidentiality followed.
- Staff training for safeguarding is up to date and leaders provide frequent reminders and prompts about safeguarding. A strong focus on training and leaders' clear expectations ensure that staff understand any new information fully and that written policies are followed in practice.
- Staff keep detailed records of any concerns they have about children's welfare. Records show that staff report concerns to the headteacher promptly and that swift and appropriate action supports any child at risk of harm.
- Leaders liaise effectively with other agencies to help pupils and families in times of need. For example, leaders make sure that bereavement counselling is available for pupils affected by bereavement.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Teachers create an excellent climate for learning where pupils concentrate and engage fully. Positive working relationships pervade, classrooms are calm and

lessons are purposeful.

- Teachers have a strong and consistent impact on learning and progress is now much faster in reading, writing and mathematics than in the past. No time is wasted and staff ensure that all learning proceeds swiftly without interruptions.
- The new reading curriculum is well organised and supports smooth progress across key stages 1 and 2. Daily reading sessions allow pupils to practise reading skills regularly. Teachers use questioning very effectively to deepen pupils' understanding and extend comprehension skills. Teachers manage extra reading sessions for pupils who need any additional support well and successfully help all pupils to achieve their best in this subject.
- Staff deliver highly structured, short, sharp phonics lessons every day. Small-group sessions allow staff to match tasks to the specific needs and abilities of each pupil. As a result, current pupils develop phonics skills securely.
- Staff apply the school's assessment policy consistently. Leaders introduced a system of 'live marking' to encourage staff to intervene during lessons whenever they spot misconceptions or errors in pupils' work. This system means that pupils receive frequent verbal feedback about their work during lessons and progress is swift.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge in mathematics lessons. Daily sessions provide a strong focus on calculation skills. Pupils use speed and fluency when tackling calculations and mental arithmetic. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to choose their own methods to solve mathematical problems. As a result, not as many pupils work at greater depth in mathematics as in reading.
- Pupils enjoy their writing lessons, keenly writing for different purposes. Younger pupils use story mapping skilfully to plan their own versions of common fairy tales. Pupils use their plans to retell stories in detail, entertaining their peers with lively storytelling and impressive word choices.
- Staff help to improve pupils' handwriting skills well. They follow an agreed handwriting scheme to structure each pupil's progress so that pupils develop neat and legible handwriting. However, pupils' spelling skills are not as well developed as their handwriting.
- Pupils enjoy science lessons and talk excitedly about experiments undertaken. Teachers focus heavily on enriching pupils' vocabulary in science. This is demonstrated successfully when older pupils recall learning about protons and neutrons and younger pupils remember how they investigated magnetic attraction.
- Teaching assistants are knowledgeable in many subjects, capably building pupils' skills across the curriculum. For example, key stage 1 pupils used focus and tenacity to write simple codes to direct programmable toys around specific points on a map. Teaching assistants encouraged pupils to learn from mistakes so that each pupil learned rapidly how to unpick and debug simple coding errors in the programs they created.
- Teachers adapt the content of lessons carefully to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Specialist teachers help staff to set appropriate and achievable targets for pupils with very specific needs, such as those who have impaired hearing. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities engage fully in lessons and make similar good progress to

their peers.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils thrive in the inclusive atmosphere of this welcoming school. They feel safe in school and say that all staff are kind and helpful. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers endorse this view. Bullying is rare. Pupils told the inspector: 'Teachers notice if anyone is unkind; they deal with bullying well and always sort it out.'
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They recognise the importance of learning to swim and know how to keep safe near the river and by the sea. Pupils understand how to stay safe while using the internet and know they must tell an adult if anything online upsets or concerns them.
- Pupils show care and respect for each other, working cooperatively and listening attentively to classmates. They proudly take on different roles and responsibilities around school, such as becoming school councillors and writing anti-bullying leaflets for other pupils to take home.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Older pupils showed a depth of maturity while discussing British values during the inspection. They ably explain complex concepts such as tolerance and democracy.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils work very well together and their sensible behaviour supports their good progress. Movement around classrooms and between tasks is calm and quiet so that no time is wasted and a strong focus on learning is sustained. Staff deal with the very rare incidents of misbehaviour swiftly.
- Pupils are proud of the good behaviour around school and try their best in lessons. Pupils' English and mathematics books are mostly neat and tidy, showing the care that pupils take with their learning. However, this care is not as evident in topic books.
- Pupils are polite towards staff and visitors. They respond to teachers promptly with enthusiasm, respect and confidence. Pupils have many opportunities to make decisions and leaders value their contributions. For example, the school's council helped to write the school's new behaviour policy recently.
- Attendance has improved considerably since the previous inspection. For current pupils, attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Leaders work closely with parents to try to reduce repeated absences. However, this work has only just started to improve attendance for some pupils.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- As the number of pupils in each year group is very small, published information about progress and attainment is limited in significance. However, the published data available does show an improving trend in progress and achievement throughout the early years and key stage 1 over the past three years.
- Staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that most pupils in key stage 1 at least reach the standards that are expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standards is above other schools nationally.
- Pupils' outcomes have improved over time, with more pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics than at the previous inspection. This is due particularly to improvements that leaders have made to teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school's own information about pupils' progress and attainment shows that improving trends at key stage 1 continue into Years 3 and 4. Work in pupils' books confirms that pupils in key stage 2 make good progress and achieve standards expected for their age. A larger proportion of pupils in key stage 2 are now working at greater depth, especially in reading. This is because teachers challenge the most able pupils adeptly, using in-depth questioning to unpick their understanding of texts.
- Across the school generally, not as many of the current pupils are working at the higher standards in mathematics, especially compared to the large proportion achieving such high standards and greater depth of understanding in reading. In mathematics, teachers do not provide frequent enough opportunities for pupils to find their own solutions to mathematical problems and this prevents pupils from developing greater depth in their thinking.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities engage fully in lessons and so make similar good progress to their peers. Specialist teachers from the local authority help staff to provide specific and achievable targets for pupils with very specific needs, such as those who have impaired hearing.
- There are only small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group. The school's own information shows that this group makes good progress in line with their peers. Additional sessions provided at lunchtime, during the day and after school ensure that disadvantaged pupils meet their full potential. Several disadvantaged pupils across school now work at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Results from the Year 1 phonics screening check show that skills are improving in this subject. Current pupils use their good phonics skills to tackle unfamiliar words and the structured approach to teaching phonics has improved pupils' outcomes over recent years.

## Early years provision

Good

- Since the previous inspection, specialist advisers from the local authority have supported leaders to make effective changes to teaching, learning and assessment in

the early years. Provision has improved significantly since then so that it now offers a good environment for learning. Currently, children in the early years make good progress from their different starting points.

- Many children enter school with skills that are broadly typical for their age or just below. However, their skills in reading, writing and number are lower than in other aspects of learning. Consequently, staff ensure that activities focus closely on improving these areas and help most children achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. Early years staff prepare children well for their move into Year 1.
- Staff provide interesting activities for children to explore inside and outside. During the inspection, children were excited to play in the snow. Staff built upon children's ideas very effectively by listening to and observing their play. They extended children's ideas with thoughtful questioning so that simple snow-building quickly developed into modelling and retelling a snowy version of 'Goldilocks and the Three Snow Bears'.
- Leaders set up exciting activities to develop number skills. For example, 'squishy subtraction' activities challenge children to solve problems with modelling clay. Staff observe closely and intervene at just the right moment to question children about their work. As a result, children explain mathematical thinking in more detail and depth.
- Writing is a particular focus area this year, so staff provide many new pieces of equipment to encourage and improve writing skills. As such, children readily access 'talking clipboards' to record ideas vocally and then write them down in words and pictures.
- Children acquire reading skills quickly in daily phonics lessons. Structured small-group tasks allow staff to give individual support matched closely to children's different abilities. Skilled specialist assistants help children who have very specific SEN and/or disabilities so that these children make equally swift progress in phonics.
- The early years leader and her team are highly skilled. The leader has a clear understanding of what is needed to continue to improve outcomes in the early years. She checks the work of other staff frequently to ensure that assessments are accurate.
- Parents hold the early years team in high regard and effuse about the progress made by their children. Parents explain that children love to come to school and are keen to find out what they will be learning each day. Staff provide useful information to help parents support children's learning and give regular feedback on their achievements.
- Children's behaviour is impeccable. Their high level of cooperation is impressive for their age. They share and take turns sensibly in all activities. Children's excellent behaviour underpins their swift learning.
- Safeguarding is effective in the early years. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements because staff care for children well, keeping them safe and secure in the setting.

## School details

Unique reference number	122309
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10042171

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

Type of school	First school
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Simpson
Headteacher	Clare McGregor
Telephone number	01289 307 785
Website	<a href="http://www.st-cuthbertsrc.northumberland.sch.uk/">www.st-cuthbertsrc.northumberland.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	admin@st-cuthbertsrc.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 February 2016

## Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's First School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils at the school are of White British heritage.
- Although very few in number, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is broadly in line with other schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an educational, health and care plan is below average when compared to other schools nationally.
- A small but increasing proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.

- The school provides a minimum of 15 hours of education for Nursery children either in the morning or the afternoon. Some parents buy additional hours for their Nursery children during the week. The school offers 30 hours of free provision for working parents of children in the Nursery if families qualify for this government-funded support. Reception children attend full-time.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classrooms across the school, including several sessions observed jointly with the headteacher. A sample of pupils' books in a number of subjects was scrutinised and discussed with leaders. Some pupils from Year 1 and Year 4 read to the inspector and talked about their experiences of reading at home and school.
- The inspector met with governors, the headteacher, middle leaders and other staff. A small group of pupils talked with the inspector to share their views about the school. The inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority and diocese.
- The inspector evaluated a wide range of school documents, including the school's development plan, the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' outcomes and attendance. The inspector looked at documents relating to safeguarding and scrutinised the school's records of checks made on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The inspector considered the 25 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

## Inspection team

Anne Humble, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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