



St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108506
LEA Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 277990
Inspection dates 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Christopher Quigley

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Balmain Road
School category	Voluntary aided		North Kenton
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2860129
Number on roll	249	Fax number	0191 2864076
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Lawrence Jones
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Nicholas Conway

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Cuthbert's is situated to the north west of Newcastle. Most pupils are Catholic from a White British background but the school admits a growing number of pupils from other backgrounds. Attainment on entry is average. Twenty per cent of pupils take a free school meal, this is broadly average. There is an average proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including four who have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The headteacher has been in post for less than one academic year and there have been significant changes to the leadership team of the school during this time, including a new chair of governors and a new deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that is improving at a rapid rate. It gives good value for money and is well placed to go from strength to strength. The school's own evaluation that it is satisfactory is over cautious but shows the determination of the headteacher, staff and governors in settling for nothing short of excellence. Governors provide a good level of challenge for the school to do well. The headteacher and his team have worked effectively with the local authority to identify and tackle underachievement and pupils are now making good progress. New systems for tracking pupils' achievements are working well but targets for pupils are not challenging enough. Effective appraisal for teachers and assistants is helping to drive up standards. A highly effective mentoring system is helping pupils at risk of underachievement to keep on track.

Teachers' questioning skills are being developed well but questions are not always used successfully to involve pupils fully in all lessons. The curriculum is good in helping pupils to reach outstanding levels of personal development. Writing throughout the curriculum has developed well over the past year, but pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply the basic skills of literacy and numeracy to their work in other subjects. The Foundation Stage is good and children achieve well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The Catholic ethos of the school is evident in every aspect of its work and the excellent partnership between the parish and the school gives pupils a strong sense of belonging. The school enjoys a well-deserved good reputation within the community. As one parent said, 'I am proud to say which school my son attends.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Make targets for pupils more challenging.
- Improve further the opportunities for pupils to apply basic skills in all subjects.
- Improve further pupils' involvement in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Although last year's test results showed underachievement for the oldest pupils in writing, all pupils are now making good progress and standards are rising. This is because of effective target setting that has been designed to tackle underachievement and because teaching has improved. Good and sometimes outstanding teaching has taken pupils beyond their targets. The school now needs to increase its expectations for pupils so that they continue to make good progress. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well because of the school's commitment to inclusion. Standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are above average but they are not applied rigorously across the curriculum. This means that teachers sometimes settle for work in other subjects that does not reflect pupils' skills in the basics and this limits their achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The level of spirituality throughout the school is exceptional. Pupils visit the chapel regularly to reflect or to pray. Artwork, music and trips to Holy Island help pupils to appreciate the beauty of life and the excellent links with the parish give them a real sense of belonging. Pupils eat and drink healthily whilst in school. Governors are passionate about providing the best quality lunches and the pupils have played a major role in developing fitness equipment in the playgrounds. Their behaviour is outstanding. They respect each other and many parents told inspectors how they were delighted with behaviour at the school. As pupils grow up, they learn to look after themselves well, help others in their community and enjoy the full range of activities provided by the school. They are well prepared for adult life because of their good progress in the basic skills and the strength of their personal development. Attendance figures are above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good and sometimes outstanding teaching helps pupils make good progress. Good teaching in English and mathematics plays a significant part in helping them learn well and acquire good levels of basic skills in these subjects. The quality of teaching has improved a great deal during the current school year and led to better learning. Teachers are imaginative in the choice of teaching methods and secure a good response from the pupils. In the Year 6 class, pupils formed a 'conscience alley' where the class split into two lines and acted as a character's conscience as they walked down the 'alley'. This captured the imagination of everyone and the pupils said that all of their lessons were just as exciting. An outstanding dance lesson in Year 1 and another in Foundation Stage showed that teachers really knew the needs of children well. Teachers give good feedback to pupils and they are continuing to refine this process. Questioning is improving but is not sophisticated enough to involve all pupils in lessons and measure their understanding effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy visits to Kielder and Holy Island, and their work with visiting artists. This is a strong area of the curriculum. Almost every activity relates to the Catholic ethos of the school and this helps pupils to reach an outstanding level of personal development. School lunches and playtimes are not merely a break in the day but an extension of the work in the curriculum to promote healthy living. Basic skills in English and mathematics are given a high priority in the curriculum but other subjects are not used enough to give pupils further practice in their use.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for pupils very well, both physically and in their spiritual development. Support for the most vulnerable pupils is good. A highly effective mentoring scheme identifies those who are at risk of underachievement and gives one-to-one support in helping them to achieve their targets. In many cases, teachers' marking gives pupils the guidance they need to improve their work but the quality of marking is variable and pupils are not always certain how to respond. The pupils are safe because of good systems to safeguard their welfare.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership is good. In a relatively short space of time, leaders have identified and tackled underachievement. Pupils are now making good progress. This impressive record of accomplishment stems from good self-evaluation, which takes into account the views of parents, the parish and pupils. Although it is over cautious in its judgements, the school knows very well what are its strengths and weaknesses and has a good capacity for further improvement. The headteacher has confronted unacceptable standards and he has marshalled his team to provide a much-improved quality of education. The headteacher works in very good partnership with the local authority, which has provided an outstanding level of support and challenge to the school over the past year. Governors challenge the school to give the very best to pupils and they have been resolute in holding out for the right person to appoint as deputy headteacher. They have now found a highly capable leader. A good system of appraisal holds teachers and their assistants to account for the progress that pupils make. Although targets have tackled underachievement, they do not reflect the capabilities of pupils, who, because of good teaching, exceed their targets. Leaders need to have even higher expectations for pupils so that they continue to improve. Excellent partnerships with the parish give pupils a real sense of belonging. The whole community supports the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	No
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London

WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800

F 0207 421 6707

Ofsted helpline

08456 404045

To the pupils of:

St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School

Balmain Road

North Kenton

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE3 3QR

13 June 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for your help and your welcome when we visited your school for our inspection. We were impressed by your excellent behaviour and your enthusiasm for learning. Here is a list of what we thought your teachers do well.

make lessons interesting

care for you well

give you good advice so you improve

work very well with the parish to make you feel part of a community

help you to love God and to understand your responsibilities

always look for better ways to teach you.

Your headteacher has been very good at improving the school because he found that some of you weren't making as much progress as you should. To help the school to carry on improving we have asked him to:

make your targets more challenging

carry on with the improvements to teaching

help you use your basic skills in other subjects.

Thank you again for helping us.

Yours sincerely

Chris Quigley

Lead Inspector