



# St Bega's RC Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111697  
**LEA** Hartlepool  
**Inspection number** 278753  
**Inspection dates** 22 June 2006 to 23 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Andrew Scott

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Thorpe Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Hartlepool
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		TS24 0DX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01429 267768
<b>Number on roll</b>	160	<b>Fax number</b>	01429 267768
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Pat Carroll
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Michael Cooney

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22 June 2006 - 23 June 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 278753
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves children who mainly come from the Headland, an urban area of Hartlepool adjacent to the port, where social and economic conditions are below average. Pupils are predominantly from White British families and none has English as a second language. The movement of the pupil population is below average, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school had Beacon status between 2000 and 2005, and has developed its provision more recently by establishing a Children's Centre and Extended School status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Bega's is a good school. It is highly respected by parents and is an important part of the local community. The school is exemplary in its care for pupils, and has high expectations of pupils' personal development. Consequently, pupils are a credit to the school and their families. They are keen to learn, and take part eagerly in all activities. They absorb the strong Christian ethos that permeates the school and so are kind and thoughtful. They behave extremely well.

Standards are usually above average by Year 6, but are average at present, mainly because the more able pupils do not achieve quite so well as other pupils, especially in English. Pupils' achievement is good overall because the good teaching focuses sharply on the development of key skills. Children's progress through the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) is satisfactory. Teaching here is satisfactory, but not consistently challenging enough to enable pupils to achieve all their expected goals. The broad curriculum is well enriched by many interesting activities outside lessons. However, the school is aware that the curriculum should provide more scope for independent learning and also make better use of all subjects to strengthen pupils' basic skills.

The leadership of the headteacher is good. His caring and dedicated approach has enabled the school to maintain pupils' achievement at a good level. He is well supported by an effective management team and governing body. Although the school has a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and areas for development, it does not make the most of its data on pupils' progress to benefit standards. Nevertheless, it has good capacity to improve and gives good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage.
- Devise a more creative and diverse curriculum that includes a better range of opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning and extend their basic skills.
- Be more rigorous in using data from tests to raise standards, especially for the more able pupils.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Children begin school with skills and abilities that are lower than is typical of three-year-olds. Their communication and creative skills are especially weak. They make satisfactory progress through the Nursery and Reception years. Most children do not quite reach their expected targets, although a few do.

By Year 2, pupils tend to achieve well and standards are usually average in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year, standards fell to below average because no pupils reached the higher levels in the national tests. Greater challenge in the current year

has resulted in better achievement and average standards, especially in reading and writing. Standards in mathematics are similar to those last year but this represents good progress, as the mathematical ability of this class was particularly weak when they began school.

By Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science have been above average until recently. Standards fell to average last year, because of a weak showing in science and because the more able pupils did not achieve well enough. Standards are similar to those last year in English and science. This represents good achievement, particularly among the high percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties. Standards in mathematics this year are higher and above the levels expected nationally. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties achieve well but do not necessarily reach the standards expected for their age.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are exceptionally good. Pupils love their school. They can find little wrong with it, except for a need for more playground equipment. Good attendance reflects their eagerness to learn and to take part in the many activities. They enjoy lessons because they say they are fun, 'sometimes hard, sometimes easy'. Pupils feel very safe in school. They say that there is occasional misbehaviour, but teachers deal with it very effectively. Pupils' behaviour during the inspection was exemplary.

The Christian influence is strong but subtle, especially through class assemblies, so that pupils develop a spiritual approach to life. Very fruitful links with the community give pupils a close affinity with their local culture. Indeed, the local newspaper often features their exploits. Although the school could do more to increase pupils' awareness of multicultural issues, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Pupils take part in a lot of sport and often do well. The girls' football team recently won a local 'World Cup' competition. Pupils appreciate exercise as part of healthy living and eat wisely, for the most part, at lunchtimes. They acquire good skills to help them prepare for life ahead, especially at their next school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable and explain work clearly so pupils make good progress in their learning. They have very good relationships with their pupils and use praise well to give them confidence and raise their self-esteem. Pupils respond by behaving well and working hard. Work in literacy and numeracy is carefully structured so that pupils gain a good grasp of basic principles. However, in some lessons, this leads to a lack of opportunities, especially for more able pupils, to think and learn for themselves. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory,

although the pace of learning is slower in lessons than elsewhere in the school and some explanations lack clarity.

Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) and imaginative resources to stimulate pupils' writing. For example, pupils in Year 6 were moved to write very persuasive letters of complaint in response to a spurious e-mail saying that funding for transport for a much anticipated school trip was to be withdrawn. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are given constructive individual support by teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and most pupils know their targets and how to achieve them.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

There is a good curriculum which concentrates sharply on key skills. The timetable is skilfully planned to allow ample time for all subjects. Pupils talk excitedly about hands-on activities, such as science investigations and visits that enrich their classroom learning. The many clubs after school are popular and promote team spirit and a healthy lifestyle. However, everyday lessons are not routinely stimulating and teachers do not make the most of opportunities in all subjects to strengthen skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good, because work is well adapted to be challenging and learning plans are clearly focused on individual needs. Teachers often challenge the more able pupils but the work set is not always sufficiently different from that set for other pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care and support are outstanding. Excellent links with the community and parents enable pupils to develop extremely well as individuals. Initiatives such as the walking bus, Wednesday letters and open meetings for parents are all examples of how the school 'goes the extra mile', as one parent said, to support pupils and communicate with parents. Another parent added, 'The wonderful staff make school a home from home for the children'. Child protection arrangements and health and safety procedures are all firmly in place and well understood by all staff. Pupils say that they feel very secure and have several adults they can turn to if they need help or advice. Pupils' personal development is tracked carefully by staff, who know the pupils really well and have an excellent rapport with them. The atmosphere in the Year 6 class, for example, is relaxed yet encouraging and focused. Pupils understand how their work is marked and how to achieve the targets set. Teachers use praise shrewdly to reward pupils for good work and raise their self-esteem.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher is an enthusiastic, approachable and committed leader who generates a real community ethos at St Bega's. He values pupils and staff alike, and is very supportive of individual achievement. Indeed, he has encouraged and enabled support staff to develop their skills to a high level in order to enhance learning for all pupils. He is well supported by senior teachers, who have a good variety of skills and so work very effectively as a team. Together, they set clear direction for the school.

The school evaluates itself reasonably well, and its priorities are sensible. A more creative curriculum, for example, has rightly been identified as a beneficial development, and the school's plans already embrace aspects of the Foundation Stage. However, issues are not analysed or monitored astutely enough to drive through improvements swiftly. The achievement of the more able pupils, for example, is still not as good as it should be.

Governors know the strengths of the school well, ensure good financial management and are closely involved in its daily life. Maximum use is made of a wide range of extended services to support pupils with specific needs. The school forges outstanding links with parents and the community to support its work. As a result, it has a very good reputation locally. The school maintained its high level of care and good achievement over recent years and is, therefore, in a good position to improve further.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1	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	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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

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To the pupils of:

St Bega's RC Primary School

Thorpe Street

Hartlepool

TS24 0DX

23 June 2006

Dear pupils

Mrs Wallis and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school, and meeting you and your teachers. Thank you very much for all your comments and help around the school.

Like you, we believe that your school gives you a good education. All the staff take excellent care of you and help you develop extremely well as individuals. You clearly enjoy your work and are eager to learn new things in and out of class. You get on very well together; indeed, we could not fault your behaviour during our visit. We believe that the strong Catholic influence helps you to be kind and thoughtful.

You do well in your work, especially in English, mathematics and science, because teaching is good. Your teachers organise your learning well and give you plenty of practice on your basic skills. They give you sensible advice about how to improve your work, which we know you appreciate and learn from. You have a good, caring headteacher who is developing your school well, along with the staff and governors. Your parents think very highly of your school and we know how important you are to your community. We enjoyed reading features about you in the local newspaper.

To make your school even better, we have asked the school to give more chances in lessons to work independently and to make sure that work is challenging for everyone.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Additional Inspector