



St Cuthbert's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114256
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279348
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Dave Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Crook Church Hill
School category	Voluntary aided		Crook
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		County Durham, DL15 9DN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01388 762889
Number on roll	207	Fax number	01388 762889
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr William Laws
Date of previous inspection	1 October 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Simpson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors supported by the pupils, staff and governors of the school.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school that educates 207 girls and boys aged from 3 to 11. An above average proportion of pupils have disadvantaged backgrounds but the attainment of children on entry is broadly average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin and none requires support for English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and of those having learning and behavioural difficulties are similar to the national average. The number of pupils starting and leaving school at times other than the normal is relatively low. The school is part of the DFES TESTBED initiative for developing information communication technology (ICT). It has achieved the Healthy Schools and Active Mark Gold awards along with Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark and is an ICT register school..

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with a number of significant strengths. Children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) start with average standards and achieve well. The achievement of pupils in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall. By the end of Year 6, standards are in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is outstanding in ICT and good in design and technology and performing arts. Pupils with learning and physical disabilities do as well as other pupils. The teaching, although of a satisfactory quality, does not offer enough challenge for the more able pupils in Years 3 to 6. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enriched by a very good range of activities that brings aspects of learning alive. Good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contribute to good behaviour and attitudes among pupils. The school is very caring but weaknesses in the accommodation adversely affect the welfare of pupils and staff. The school benefits from strong leadership by the headteacher but not enough is done to utilise the strengths of other key staff in the school's management. Since the last inspection, standards have declined overall and improvement therefore has been unsatisfactory. The exception is in the quality and provision for ICT and the Foundation Stage where improvement has occurred. Recent attention to standards in English, mathematics and science and better management and teaching give the school a satisfactory capacity for improving in the future. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

The most significant improvements needed are to:

- Ensure that the teaching stretches the more able pupils.
- Increase the opportunities for the management team to monitor and improve school provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement are satisfactory overall with outstanding progress in information communication technology and good standards in design and technology and the performing arts. From average standards when they start, children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well overall. By the end of Year 2, standards and the pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics are satisfactory. The pupils' performance in the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 is improving after a period when it was unsatisfactory. In 2005, attainment at the end of Year 6 matched similar schools but more able pupils are still underachieving. Improvements in the use of assessment data has lifted expectations in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 and targets for the pupils are now challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils like coming to school and attendance is good. In the main, pupils say they enjoy lessons, particularly the numerous opportunities they have to use computers. Pupils behave well and show high levels of care for others. They are confident and reflective when discussing their school. Even the younger pupils have a good understanding that being part of a community brings rights and responsibilities. An enriched curriculum, in which there is extensive use of ICT and a wide range of educational visits and visitors, provides pupils with a range of experiences that will prepare them well for their future lives. Pupils in Year 2, for example, explain how important it is to work hard so that they will have a better chance of doing what they want when they are older.

The Healthy School and Active Mark Gold awards have been gained. As a result, pupils know about ways to promote healthy lifestyles through diet and exercise. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good sense of fair play; they know the school rules and behave well. They mix well in lessons, readily sharing their knowledge and ideas. Through their discussions in class and school councils pupils have a good understanding of democratic processes and know that it is important to consider the views of others. They appreciate their own culture and close links with schools abroad are developing a good understanding of cultures which are different from their own.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Despite a recent improvement in standards, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. This judgement is lower than the school's. There are significant strengths in the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and Years 2 and 6. In lessons in these classes, pupils of all abilities are challenged through stimulating activities. Teachers' use of ICT to support learning is far better than normally found and adds to the enthusiasm that the vast majority of pupils have for school. The needs of most pupils, however, are met, but expectations for the more able are not always high enough. Good support from skilled teaching assistants enables pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties to be fully involved in school life and to make progress that matches that of other pupils. Teachers know the pupils well but the assessment of pupils' achievement is not always used effectively enough in every class. Marking is adequate with some good examples whereby pupils are shown how to improve. All teachers value the personal development of their pupils and very successfully build up pupils' self-esteem and confidence. This is reflected in the way pupils happily participate in dance and musical performances and get involved in the wide range of clubs available to them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school judges its curriculum to be good. Inspectors agree that there are some good and very good features but they judge the curriculum to be satisfactory overall. Although regular reviews are made of the curriculum, the school has not made suitable adjustments to meet the needs of more able pupils. This is one of the reasons why these pupils do not always do as well as they can. When teachers link subjects around a central theme, pupils enjoy learning and are provided with good opportunities to develop a range of skills including those for writing. This is not yet however a consistent feature of the curriculum. There is outstanding provision for ICT which is a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection. The Foundation Stage curriculum gets children off to a good start and establishes very good routines for learning. Provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Good emphasis is given to raising pupils' awareness of global issues and the need to protect the environment. This gives them a mature view of life and raises their aspirations for their future. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is very well enriched by focus weeks, frequent visits and visitors and a good range of activities outside of lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good overall. One parent with three children in school commented that although her children all have different abilities and personalities, all their different needs are met with sensitivity. The relevant procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are in place. Staff take every opportunity to promote pupils' personal development and well-being and consistently provide the support pupils need to make sure they are happy in school. The poor condition of the school building however works against the school's good teaching with regard to being healthy and staying safe. The support and guidance provided for pupils' academic progress are satisfactory overall. When marking pupils' work, some teachers provide good guidance on what it is they require pupils to do next, with good reference to targets for improvement. This is not yet carried out consistently by all teachers or in all subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. This ensures that the school runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The headteacher has created a strong ethos of care and has the confidence of parents and the community. A significant lead is given to the provision for pupils' personal development and welfare but, until recently, not enough attention has been given to setting high enough expectations for academic development. This weakness has been recognised by the school and better management in mathematics and science in particular are now improving standards.

The headteacher takes much responsibility on her shoulders and has not been able to fully delegate important responsibilities to others. As a result, other senior teachers have not had enough chance to influence decision-making by effectively monitoring standards and teaching. Despite this, the management of the key areas of the school's provision such as the Foundation Stage, ICT and support for pupils with learning difficulties are good. The school is satisfactorily resourced with outstanding provision for ICT. Governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met but governors are not involved enough in keeping an eye on standards. The school is now improving academic standards and, although there are still gaps in the senior management team, it has a satisfactory capacity to continue to do so in future.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	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	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	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?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	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	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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	Yes
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

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St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Crook
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DL15 9DN

2 December 2005

Dear Children,

Thank you for so warmly welcoming us both to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and joining some of your lessons. We are very impressed with the way that your teachers help you to become caring, confident and happy people. Most of you work hard and learn to read, write and do mathematics as well as we expected you to. At times though, we felt that work was too easy for some of you and when this happens you don't learn as well as you can. We have asked the school to find ways of making sure that each of you is given work that matches what you can do.

You are very lucky to be able to make so much use of information and communication technology. We were amazed at how good you are at using computers. We feel that this is one reason why you clearly enjoy school so much. Another reason is that there are lots of fun activities going on in addition to lessons. We were impressed by how well those of you in Year 2 performed your dance before taking part in the Dance Festival.

Everyone at St Cuthbert's seems to be a big family. It is good to see the way that you all got on well together, sharing, caring and thinking of others. You all behave safely and know how important it is to eat healthily and take exercise. We are pleased to see the way you think of others who are less fortunate than yourselves and how you understand the lives of children in some other countries.

We both wish you lots of luck for the future and hope that you not only continue to enjoy school but also work hard and do as well as you can.

Yours faithfully,

David Byrne and Linda Buller (School Inspectors)