

St Cuthberts Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108616
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	288141
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kath O'Neill
Headteacher	Mr Alan Egdell
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	Lovaine Place North Shields Tyne and Wear NE29 0BU
Telephone number	0191 2005620
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size primary school and nursery, provides for mainly Roman Catholic families in the locality. The school serves an area average in terms of its socio-economic characteristics but with some pockets of deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number, mainly from Asian Filipino backgrounds, are learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but an average number have a statement of special educational need. Earlier this school year, the school was without a headteacher but since January 2007 it has worked in collaboration with another local Roman Catholic primary school where both schools are led by an executive headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Cuthbert's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The new executive headteacher, who brings exceptional experience, has invigorated the school and very successfully promotes its Christian ethos and a philosophy that every child does matter. Most parents are delighted with the school and, in particular, that their children enjoy school and are both safe and well cared for. One parent's comment encapsulates the views of many: 'St Cuthbert's is a vibrant, happy school that has instilled great Catholic values ... Both my children are happy, bright and love coming to school.'

Good quality teaching is helping pupils in most classes make good progress and achieve well. The school assesses and analyses each pupil's progress carefully and gives prompt support whenever the need arises. This leads to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is not their first language, achieving well. Effective links with the local authority, the diocese, neighbouring schools and both visits and visitors enrich the curriculum for all pupils. However, planned activities for the Foundation Stage outside area do not exploit the opportunities available.

Children's attainment is broadly typical of that of most three-year-olds when they begin the nursery. They make good progress through the Foundation Stage, especially in the Reception year, so that by the time they are five, standards are above average. Standards by the end of Year 2 fell in 2006 and were below average, reflecting some underachievement by this particular year group through Key Stage 1. However, the situation has been tackled well. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have recently made rapid gains and attainment is now average by the end of Key Stage 1. Standards in the 2006 Year 6 national tests improved on previous years and were average overall in English and science but remained below average in mathematics. Even so, some pupils underachieved in each subject because their progress was inconsistent through the key stage. New leadership has led to phenomenal improvement since January. Improved systems have been embedded. Staff have been invigorated and a changing culture has led to increased precision, tightly focused use of assessment and consistency in promoting high achievement throughout the school. This has led to rapid improvement. Standards have improved considerably in 2007. Year 3 pupils are making outstanding progress from their starting point at the beginning of the year, more than compensating for earlier underachievement. Pupils in Year 6 are making good progress and are on track to meet the challenging targets set for them.

Through good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the school successfully encourages pupils to be good citizens, and prepares them well for their future. They are polite and extremely well behaved. Pupils know how to stay safe. New playground equipment fosters exercise and many pupils take part in after-school sports activities. Awards reflect pupils' awareness of health and fitness. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and the wider community, showing compassion towards the needs of others and supporting many charities.

The headteacher and governors ensure the school has a clear and accurate perspective on all aspects of its work. They have successfully addressed all issues from the last inspection and have a well-thought-through plan for improvement. The headteacher brings enormous strengths and, although many of the initiatives are at an early stage of development, the effectiveness of evaluation and action are accelerating progress. Given the relative inexperience of middle leaders, value for money and the capacity for further improvement are satisfactory.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics and ensure recent gains in the progress made by pupils are sustained.
- Further develop the leadership and management roles of middle leaders.
- Embed recent improvements to ensure long-term school improvement is sustained.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards overall are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory, although recent improvements have led to rapid gains and have increased the pace at which pupils are making progress.

Children join the nursery with broadly similar abilities to most others of the same age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage as a result of good overall provision, especially in the Reception class, and begin Year 1 with above average abilities.

In Key Stage 1, pupils' attainments and progress slipped year-on-year and fell below average in Year 2 statutory assessments in 2006. Their progress last year was unsatisfactory. However, the issues have been tackled well and progress has improved; it is now good with rapid gains being made in Key Stage 1 this year. After falling in recent years, standards in the Year 6 national tests improved in 2006 and were close to average in English and science. These improvements stem from the school's involvement in a national programme of intensive support undertaken in partnership with the local authority. Standards in mathematics remained below average. However, despite improvements, some pupils underachieved due to inconsistencies overall through the key stage. The school met its targets in English, but fell a little short in mathematics.

Due to rapid improvements brought about through developments in teachers' use of assessment and a much tighter focus upon ensuring consistency of challenge and quality in teaching, progress has accelerated rapidly over recent months. There is a greater emphasis on improving achievement at the school. Pupils currently in Year 2 are making much better progress with a clear upturn in standards in their statutory assessments for 2007. Rigorous assessments show Year 3 pupils making outstanding progress, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 making good progress. Year 6 pupils are on track to meet the challenging targets set for them and standards are currently average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is not their first language, achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Impeccable behaviour in and out of class reflects well on the care and consideration they show towards others. This contributes significantly to ensuring that pupils can learn, concentrate and work hard. Most pupils attend regularly and overall attendance is good. They enjoy taking part in all activities the school offers. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and that bullying is rare. They are polite and respectful towards each other and property. They understand the benefits of healthy eating

and the need for physical exercise, taking full advantage of the new outdoor equipment that fosters play and exercise. In turn, the school has gained awards for its programmes of health and fitness. Strong spiritual, moral and social development is a major factor in supporting the good contribution pupils make to the school and the local and wider communities. The choir regularly sings at community events. A Christian ethos permeates all aspects of school life with pupils showing compassion towards, and understanding of, the needs of each other. Pupils confidently take on responsibilities, such as representing their class on the school council and taking the role of playground buddies. They willingly support many charities and show concern for people who are facing poverty and hunger around the world. Cultural development is good and pupils successfully learn about their own and other cultures and faiths. Average standards for literacy and numeracy, along with good personal skills and attitudes to work provide a sound preparation for their later working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is predominantly good. New leadership has quickly drawn staff together with a common purpose, consistent expectations and more effective use of assessment to accelerate progress and improve teaching quality. Teaching is characterised by good planning and the provision of well organised and challenging tasks that are mostly well suited to pupils' abilities. This leads to pupils making good progress in lessons. Teachers foster a productive rapport and good relationships with pupils that sustain their interest and involvement. Pupils are industrious and enthusiastic when contributing to the lesson. Careful questioning challenges pupils to do better, for example, to use powerful language to enliven their stories. It enables teachers to reinforce learning and helps pupils to know what they have achieved. Occasionally, questioning does not always involve everyone and checks on pupils' progress are not followed through to consolidate their learning. Classroom resources, such as interactive whiteboards, are used well. Teaching in the nursery does not always make the best use of outdoor facilities to help children make progress towards their early learning goals. Teaching assistants provide good, well-directed support for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for the few pupils for whom English is not the home language, which helps them make good progress. Marking is informative and, although not consistently given, helpful advice and curriculum targets help pupils know what they have to do to improve. Significant developments to improve teaching have taken place this year and, in a large measure, this is responsible for some of the clearly good progress seen in pupils' work over the past few months, especially in Years 3 and 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. A recent review has been used to refine the curriculum and to ensure it both promotes the aims and values of the school and provides a wide and balanced range of opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in all subjects. A structured programme for personal and social education to complement the religious education teaching is under development, but not fully in place. Many opportunities contribute to improving personal and spiritual development and give pupils a lasting sense of accomplishment. Pupils are encouraged to reflect in lessons and assemblies with a special corner set up in each classroom for prayer and reflection. Particular strengths include enriched opportunities, for example, in music with a flourishing choir and instrumental tuition, lessons in French, the contribution of

visitors and visits to highly regarded centres and museums. These make a big contribution to pupils' cultural development and subject knowledge. Very effective partnerships with local schools foster involvement in a range of sporting activities and develop team-playing skills. Residential outdoor activities develop pupils' confidence and social skills. After-school activities extend and enrich the experiences of those who take part. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children benefit from a good variety of opportunities to learn and this fosters good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is strong with all staff being highly committed to pupils' welfare. Well-established procedures meet government requirements for safeguarding children and all staff have received up-to-date training about child protection. The school now tracks and analyses pupils' progress and achievement diligently. This helps teachers set challenging targets that encourage pupils to try hard. Information gathered is used very well to keep a tight grip on pupils' achievement and to step in quickly with intensive support where pupils are at risk of falling behind. Although support for care and guidance is good and has led to recent and rapid progress, it is still to become fully established in sustaining short-term gains throughout the school. Learning support staff work very effectively with pupils, their parents, and outside agencies to provide prompt and successful help. Equality of opportunity is promoted well, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or for whom English is not their first language, make good progress as a result of the support they receive and they play a full part in the life of the school. Although some parents expressed concern about communication, weekly newsletters encourage parents' support to help their children learn. Well-established links with the local high school ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management throughout the school are satisfactory. The new and very experienced executive headteacher has very quickly raised expectations and inspired a clear sense of purpose amongst staff and pupils. This has provided a renewed focus for staff and led to the implementation of improved systems and a changing culture with increased precision, better use of assessment and greater consistency in promoting high achievement throughout the school. Middle leaders are relatively inexperienced and provide a satisfactory lead to other staff. Nevertheless, they are working with noticeable confidence under the direction of their headteacher, although the time they have had to grow into their new roles and demonstrate an impact has been short. Governance is satisfactory. The governors give a great deal of support to the school, but have only recently been in a position to consider and comment on all aspects of its work. Governors and senior leaders are now involved in monitoring and gauging the quality of the school's work and the implementation of its new development plan. They accurately evaluate the school's work, and their priorities for improvement, which emphasise raising achievement, are entirely appropriate.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 May 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE29 0BU

Mrs Bennett and I really enjoyed our recent visit to your school. Thank you for helping us when we came into your classrooms and to your assembly to see you at work. You were very polite, well behaved and really helpful. It was great to see how much you enjoy coming to school and how you contribute to school life. I know your new headteacher and the staff are all very proud of you.

Your school has a warm and welcoming atmosphere and provides a satisfactory education for you all. We are pleased you feel safe and happy because all the adults in the school look after you very well. Most of your lessons are good and we were impressed with your hard work and the way you like to take part. With your new headteacher, we could see how quickly your school is changing and how much progress you are now making. It is important that these recent improvements continue because standards have not been as high as they ought to have been until this year. We have asked the school to improve your work in English and mathematics. It has already started. We have seen some of your work this year and it is much better. I thought those of you in Year 6 spoke very clearly and confidently when you shared your ideas with the class.

Some of you will leave at the end of this year to join a new school. You have a lot of opportunities at St Cuthbert's Primary School to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Best wishes,

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector