

# St Cuthbert's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111683
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockton-on-Tees
<b>Inspection number</b>	289029
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gianna Ulyatt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	223
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Mary Dowson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julia Pearce
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	Parkfield Stockton-on-Tees TS18 3SY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01642 601567
<b>Fax number</b>	01642 601567

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This average-sized school is situated near the centre of Stockton. Pupils come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. The majority live in the immediate area, which is predominantly disadvantaged; unemployment is high and adult educational attainment is low. A minority of pupils come from areas of significant advantage and a few pupils come from the Traveller community. There a much higher number of boys than girls in the school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is double the national average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. The number of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is broadly average. Attainment on entry to the school is below that which is typical of three-year-olds. The school offers extended services in the form of a breakfast and after-school club.

## 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 with a warm and welcoming atmosphere. It has outstanding features in pupils' personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of its work and typical comments include, 'I could not ask for a better education or environment in which my child could be taught.' The inspection confirms the school's evaluation of itself in most respects. The school provides good value for money.

The strong Catholic ethos and very good relationships underpin the caring and supportive atmosphere in which pupils develop their personal skills. High expectations and a good emphasis given to basic skills help to ensure that pupils achieve well. Pupils' outstanding spiritual development is supported through regular opportunities for reflection and through close links with the church community. Pupils show great sensitivity towards others within the school community and also towards those in need within the wider world. They know how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and thoroughly enjoy the physical and sporting activities provided. The school prepares pupils well for their next stage of learning.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Attainment on entry is below expectations for three-year-olds. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and reach attainment that is broadly average by the start of Year 1. The good progress continues in Key Stage 1 and standards are average by the end of Year 2. A slight dip in standards in reading in the 2006 tests has been quickly addressed. Results in the Year 6 tests in 2006 were above average representing good progress. Pupils achieved particularly well in English following a successful focus on reading and writing skills. Standards in mathematics and science are slightly above average. However, progress in these subjects was not as good as in English. The school has taken immediate action and assessments indicate more consistent standards across subjects for the current cohort.

Teaching and learning are good. A strong teaching team ensures that pupils work very effectively in small groups. Relationships are very good; consequently pupils are confident, active learners. In the Foundation Stage, children work well together in groups and have opportunities to engage in chosen activities.

The good curriculum includes a wide range of enrichment activities, which enhance pupils' personal development. Planning takes full account of the different learning needs that pupils have. Although all subjects are covered, there is not enough emphasis given to linking subjects together to make learning more meaningful for pupils. The school provides good levels of care for its pupils and the required safety and safeguarding procedures are in place.

Leadership and management are good and the school has good capacity to improve further. The new headteacher operates a collegiate approach and sets out a clear vision for the school that is shared by all staff. This is firmly based on maintaining a positive ethos, raising standards further and ensuring that all pupils are well cared for and supported so that they achieve well. The new and enthusiastic senior and subject leadership teams are bringing about improvements. To support the implementation of their improvement plans, they need more opportunities to develop their role in checking on the effectiveness of the school's work. Governance is good. Governors are highly committed and support the school well.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop the role of senior managers to include more frequent evaluation of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum by strengthening links between subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils make good progress in lessons.

Attainment on entry to the Nursery is below expectations for three-year-olds with a minority having limited language and social skills. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they enter Year 1, attainment is at the expected level. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average. This reflects good achievement. In the 2006 tests, there was a slight dip in results in reading; however, the school has quickly addressed this with a more structured approach to teaching and school data indicates an improvement with the current cohort.

The school's results in the 2006 national tests for 11-year-olds were above average and pupils of all abilities exceeded their targets. The trend shows an improving picture with standards in English exceeding those of mathematics and science, due to the strong emphasis placed on reading and writing. The balance has been re-addressed and school assessments indicate standards in mathematics and science are now as good as English standards. Pupils of Traveller heritage and those from minority ethnic groups achieve exceptionally well because of the very good support they receive. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make very good progress because they are fully included in lessons and are well supported in their work, which is matched accurately to their specific learning needs.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils show high levels of self-esteem and are proud of their work. They welcome the times allocated to prayer and reflection each day. Pupils like coming to school and show good ambition and a mature attitude to their education, saying, 'We learn a lot in school and this will help us get to university.' The school uses many strategies and enticing rewards to improve attendance and punctuality and these are now satisfactory. Pupils have a clear understanding about how to live a healthy lifestyle. The youngest are given fruit every day and older pupils buy fruit in the tuck shop. All say they thoroughly enjoy physical activity and know it is important to raise the heart beat during exercise. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. They show care and consideration for each other and the wider community, having recently received the 'Care in the Community' award. Older pupils are good buddies to younger ones and help them in the playground, should the need arise. The school council is well involved in the life of the school. They respond well to ideas placed in the suggestion box. As a result, classes have a pet goldfish, there is a salad bar at lunchtime and pupils are currently filling in questionnaires about the school uniform. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and use the 'worry box' when they have need. Behaviour is good and pupils adhere well to the 'golden rules' showing a clear understanding about right and wrong. They are well prepared for their next stage of education. Standards in basic skills are good and the pupils look forward to moving

to secondary school. Children in the Foundation Stage work well together and show good concentration skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Consequently, pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. Teachers make sure pupils clearly understand what they are going to learn. Very good relationships ensure that they are confident to try hard and do their best. The excellent teamwork between the teaching assistants and teachers means that lessons are well planned with flexible teaching groups, so that the needs of the whole ability range are addressed and no one is left behind. At present, the quality of marking is satisfactory. However, the school is beginning to encourage pupils to become more responsible for their own learning and is trialling ways of developing this philosophy in some year groups so that it can be used throughout the school. In these lessons, pupils are learning to evaluate their work against individual targets and explain, 'The targets remind us of what we have to think about.' As a result, they are increasing the rate at which they make progress. In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are good; children concentrate well and have opportunities to learn independently. Pupils of all abilities and needs are well supported in small group situations during their activities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress because they have child-friendly learning targets, set by the class teacher, which are clearly understood by the pupils.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. Extra-curricular provision is also good. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and the good emphasis on personal, social and health education has a very positive influence on pupils' self-esteem. The curriculum is planned to meet the needs of all pupils and additional courses, to support pupils who may have gaps in their basic skills, are well embedded. This is one of the reasons why pupils achieve well. Although all subjects are covered, there is not enough emphasis given to linking subjects together to make learning more meaningful for pupils. The curriculum is well enriched through a good variety of educational, residential and recreational visits. Activities such as sports clubs visits from the fire and police services promote healthy and safe lifestyles. The teaching of French in Years 5 and 6 prepares pupils for language study in the secondary school. Trips to local places of historical or geographical interest contribute well to adding enjoyment to what pupils learn in class. The Foundation Stage curriculum is undergoing change and good plans are in place to create an outdoor classroom to improve the curriculum for the youngest children.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Safeguarding systems meet national guidelines and risk assessments are in place. The welfare, pastoral and emotional support for pupils is good and pupils confirm that they feel safe and are happy to come to school. A series of well planned visits, organized by Foundation Stage staff, help the youngest children settle well into school. Links with external agencies provide good support for vulnerable pupils and enable them to

make good progress particularly in their basic skills and their personal development and self-confidence.

The support and guidance provided for pupils' academic progress is good. Teachers monitor pupils' progress regularly and use the information effectively to track pupils who appear to be underachieving. The system enables the school to quickly provide additional support for pupils who need it.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher is relatively new in post and since her appointment she has revitalized the school. She is well supported by the governing body that challenges the school effectively and makes a good contribution to the school's place in the faith community. The headteacher has a clear vision on how to build on this successful school to ensure that the good standards are improved. Morale is high and staff have already incorporated many new ideas for further improvement. A relative weakness is that the newly appointed senior management team have limited opportunities to develop their role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision. Nevertheless, through the direction of the headteacher, the school has adopted a collegiate approach. Staff say, '...you are always supported in this school.' The team works enthusiastically and is beginning to improve the school's systems to monitor progress term-by-term and to analyse what needs to be improved. The headteacher and deputy headteacher collaborate with all staff when making important decisions about school development. All wholeheartedly support the thorough improvement plan, which is tightly focused on whole school evaluation. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the school has good capacity for further improvement. Governors are well informed. They meet regularly and support the school well. They show a good awareness of standards and pupils' personal development. They weigh up complex financial issues carefully to ensure that best value principles are applied. The school has good links with a range of professional services in order to improve pupils' education and well-being. Parents' views about the school are totally positive.

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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	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

2 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3SY

I had a lovely day in your school and I want to thank you for making me very welcome. It was a pleasure to talk with you and to find out how well you care for each other and those less fortunate than yourselves. I was delighted with your ambition to go to university. It will not be easy, but if you continue to work as hard as you do during your lessons, you have a good chance to reach your goals.

You have caring adults in St Cuthbert's who want the very best for each one of you. I can see that some of you are beginning to check your own work very carefully to make sure you improve it next time. You are learning through lots of different subjects and you obviously enjoy learning French. I have asked the school to think about putting some subjects together into topics perhaps, to make your lessons even more interesting. This means you will have to learn how to find out information for yourselves and it might give you a chance to do some research during homework club.

I have asked the school to look very carefully at everything you do and to make serious enquiries to find out how well you are doing and which parts of teaching and the curriculum work best for you. You in turn must always do your best so that the new ideas that the school comes up with will be accurate and can be used to help your good school become even better.

Some of you are starting a new school in September. I wish you luck and I must remind you to keep in touch with the good friends you have from St Cuthbert's and at the same time enjoy making new ones.

With very best wishes

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector