

St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112344
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289253
Inspection date	3 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Stafford Evans

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	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Baines
Headteacher	Mrs Hannah Burke
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	Princes Road Windermere Cumbria LA23 2DD
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Cuthbert's is a much smaller than average size primary school. The socio-economic context for the school is mixed but is average overall. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are White British but there are a number of newcomers from Eastern Europe and the Philippines who are learning English as an additional language. Attainment when children start school is broadly average.

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 continues to improve at a significant rate and gives good value for money. Pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support that the school provides are outstanding. Parents are extremely happy with the work of the school. The school has very good links with parents and they support the school very well. Links with the community and outside agencies are also strong features of the school.

St Cuthbert's is a harmonious place to come to and learn, in which pupils and parents describe it as 'one big happy family'. It is well placed to build on the very good improvements it has made since the last inspection. In Key Stages 1 and 2, standards have risen and are above average compared to below average at the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve well and, based on the 2006 national tests, they were in the top 10% of schools nationally. This compares very favourably with the time of the last inspection when they were in the bottom 40% of schools. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and attain standards that are at least in line with those expected nationally for children of this age, with many attaining higher standards. The teaching, learning and curriculum provision in the Foundation Stage are good.

Pupils' personal development and relationships are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are confident and treat each other with mutual respect. They show a capacity for reflection and curiosity. The very caring and supportive ethos created in the school fosters these positive characteristics. The welcoming of new pupils to the school is a very important aspect of school life. Getting to know new pupils is a cause of excitement and a basis for new learning. Although pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own culture and that of world faiths are very good, their understanding about life in our multi-cultural society is less secure.

Behaviour is excellent. There is a very relaxed atmosphere in which pupils thrive. They feel very safe; they say that the school is free from bullying. Pupils are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles, eat healthy meals and take regular exercise. Their good learning and the school's strong emphasis on their personal development ensure that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education and working life.

The work of the staff is closely monitored, evaluated and supported by the headteacher and subject leaders. This ensures that weaknesses in provision are quickly identified and rectified. This helps to ensure that teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their pupils very well. Work is planned carefully to match their varying needs. Teachers plan and prepare interesting lessons. As a result of this positive teaching, pupils make good progress. At times, in some lessons, the pace at which pupils complete their work when they work independently is too slow. This slows the rate at which they learn. Pupils who need extra help with their learning make good progress. Throughout the school, support staff provide skilled help during lessons.

Staff make it a priority to value all pupils and ensure that they are included in all activities that the school offers. There are excellent procedures in place to check on the progress that pupils make. This has been very important in bringing about improvement in academic standards because teachers have expertly used the information from these checks to set very challenging targets for pupils; this has raised everyone's expectations of what pupils should achieve.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership, ably supported by all staff, and sets the tone for the high aspirations of staff and the very good

relationships and mutual respect between all members of the school community. School self-evaluation and improvement procedures are good. Staff and governors accurately evaluate the school's performance and provision. Inspection evidence concurs with the school's judgements. Teachers use the information gained from the self-evaluation effectively. For example, the weaknesses in writing standards have been dealt with very successfully by introducing, among other good strategies, an improved marking system. As a result, pupils make good progress and many Year 6 pupils work at a level above that expected for pupils this age, which demonstrates at least good achievement for these pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils' independent learning proceeds at a brisk pace.
- Strengthen provision to further develop pupils' understanding of society's cultural diversity.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and pupils attain above average standards. The school met its challenging targets in 2006. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Most children attain nationally expected standards and others attain above these standards by the time they enter Year 1.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well. Standards are above average. Results in the national assessments are consistently above average and there has been improvement in each of the years since the last inspection. The trend over time is significantly better than the national trend.

Standards at Key Stage 2 are above average and improving. Standards have improved from below average at the time of the last inspection. There was a slight fall in 2006 to average because of the below average English results. In last year's cohort of pupils there were more pupils than usual who found learning difficult in literacy. Given their starting points, they made at least good progress. This is reflected in the overall value added, which placed the school in the top 10% of schools nationally. Pupils' achievement has improved significantly since the last inspection when the school was in the bottom 40% of schools nationally.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and many attain nationally expected standards by the end of Year 6. Although there are some signs of gender differences, there are no discernible patterns of difference in the attainment, achievement or progress of boys and girls.

Pupils who learn English as an additional language have not attended the school for very long. In the time that they have been at the school, they have made very good gains in English language acquisition and the progress in their work has been good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent and there is a real sense of friendliness about the school. The warmth of the welcome you receive is indicative of the outstanding relationships that exist within the whole school community. Pupils enjoy coming to school, reflected in the above average attendance. Pupils arrive punctually

for the start of school. They have very positive attitudes to work and are very keen learners, even if some of them are a little slow in completing their work.

Pupils have a very good understanding about the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. Many put this into practice by eating healthy snacks at break times and participating in the very wide range of physical activities, during and after school. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to adopt safe practices. They say that they feel safe in school and that the school is free of bullying.

Pupils make a very positive contribution to the community. Within the school community, the school councillors help with some decision making; for example, it was their initiative to have a 'healthy tuck shop'. In the wider community, they take part in environmental initiatives such as the annual litter pick and carol singing at various venues in the community. Their preparation for the next phase of education is excellent. They have good basic skills, including good information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and an ability to work cooperatively and collaboratively.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are particular strengths in their spiritual, moral and social development. Cultural development is good but is stronger in their understanding of their own culture when compared with their understanding of life in the culturally diverse areas of our country.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan and prepare interesting lessons. Their lesson plans show clearly what is to be taught and learnt. This is shared with pupils at the start of lessons. This helps the teacher and pupils to remain focused on the purpose of the lesson and ensure that they usually cover sufficient work in the lesson. This is not always so when pupils are allowed to work too slowly. This is usual during some of the time when they work on their own. Teachers use a range of good teaching methods. These include whole class teaching, group and individual work, and practical, investigative and problem solving activities.

A great strength of the teaching is the very good relationships between staff and pupils. This is the main reason why pupils' behaviour is so effectively managed along with high expectations of good behaviour that are ever-present in the school. This emanates from clear expectations of how pupils are to behave, generated by the headteacher and supported by all the staff.

Teachers use the results of assessment very effectively to match work to pupils' varying needs. The marking of pupils' work is good. The feedback to pupils, spoken and written, enables them to improve their performance.

Pupils' learning is good because of the good teaching. They respond readily to the challenge of the work set, show willingness to concentrate and make good progress in lessons. Pupils adjust well to the demands of working in different situations, selecting appropriate methods for carrying out tasks and organising effectively the resources they need. Pupils are confident and alert to ask questions and to persevere with their work when answers are not readily available. When appropriate, pupils work well cooperatively and collaboratively. Members of support staff are skilled in their work and assist pupils' learning effectively and contribute positively to the good progress they make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. From Nursery through to Year 6, teachers carefully plan a broad range of learning experiences for pupils that cater for interests, aptitudes and particular needs. Teachers' planning ensures that pupils build on knowledge, skills and understanding gained earlier in the school. The planning is designed to ensure that all pupils receive similar experiences, but a curriculum that meets their needs. As a result, achievement is good and pupils enjoy their learning.

There are many strengths in the curriculum but particularly noteworthy is the very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' excellent personal development. Circle time is an important part of the school timetable; for example, it is a time when sex and drugs education as well as citizenship are taught effectively. This is enhanced by involving a range of visitors with specialist expertise and visits out; for example, to a local college to develop their understanding of citizenship. The scarcity of library resources limits pupils' opportunities to develop their library and research skills. The school has well-judged plans to put right this shortcoming in curriculum provision.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The targets set for them provide clear step-by-step ways of helping them learn new skills. They are helped very effectively by skilled support staff. When appropriate, the school works closely with staff from other agencies to provide the best learning opportunities for individual pupils.

Taking the size of the school into consideration, it provides a very good range of clubs and activities after school. Teachers also plan many educational visits to support and enhance learning. This includes a residential visit for Years 4, 5 and 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are exemplary. The staff work as a very cohesive team to provide regular day-to-day care and support for pupils. They know individual pupils very well and are committed to providing the best possible care and support. Pupils and parents very much appreciate this. Procedures for checking staff are in place and the school reports that health and safety policies and procedures are adhered to. Systems for ensuring racial equality and inclusion of all pupils are firmly in place.

Procedures for checking the progress that pupils make are excellent. There are detailed records that clearly show what pupils have achieved and what they need to do to move on to their next stage of learning. The effectiveness of these systems is evident in pupils' good achievement since the systems were introduced.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership, ably supported by all staff and governors. She leads the school with great purpose and very effectively promotes good learning, high standards of achievement and pupils' excellent personal development. The headteacher delegates leadership roles to the teachers

very skilfully so subject leaders play an important role in raising standards. The headteacher makes it a priority to value everyone within the school community and to ensure that they develop their potential. All staff provide good support and there is a very good team spirit. This has brought about substantial improvement over recent years.

The school has effective procedures for the evaluation of its work. Teaching and individual pupils' progress are monitored and evaluated very carefully. The teachers use these results effectively to plan improvements. These set the right priorities and achievable targets. For example, the identified weakness in the teaching of writing was successfully tackled. Following well judged support and new strategies, the quality of teaching has improved. This has raised standards, as witnessed during the inspection by Year 6's high quality writing. This stemmed from involving pupils in assessing their own work to identify how it can be improved, by breaking down the process of writing into smaller manageable learning steps and through improved marking.

Teachers and governors play an increasingly important role in the planning for improvement. School improvement planning and school self-evaluation are good, but are too wordy and in some places lack clarity as to how staff and governors will measure the success or otherwise of their initiatives.

The school has very good relationships and communication with parents. It works hard to keep parents informed. There is truly an 'open door' policy to ensure that parents can discuss their children with their teacher whenever it is mutually convenient. The school is a very welcoming place.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1

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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Windermere, LA23 2DD

I enjoyed my visit to your school recently. Thank you for your warm welcome and a particular thank you to all of you who took the time to talk with me. You attend a good school that is becoming better and better. You are developing into sensible and thoughtful young people. You attain standards that are mainly higher than those found in other schools. This is because you are taught well and are given a wide range of interesting things to learn. The teachers know you very well and so make sure that your work is set at the right level for you to learn at a good rate. You respond by being keen to learn and by working hard. At times, in some lessons, teachers do not always make sure that you work fast enough. You can help by always concentrating on doing as much work as you possibly can.

Your school is very welcoming to visitors and new children, wherever they come from. You know a lot about your own and other faiths. To build on your good knowledge, I have asked your teachers to look at ways of helping you to develop a better understanding of how people live in different parts of our country.

Please pass on my thanks to your parents for filling in the questionnaires. Your parents are really pleased with the education that you receive and my report supports their very positive views about your school.

I wish you every success in the future.

Stafford Evans

Lead inspector