



St Cuthbert's Catholic School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112370
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289263
Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew Margerison

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Victoria Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Botcherby, Carlisle
Age range of pupils	3–11		Cumbria, CA1 2UE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01228 607505
Number on roll (school)	131	Fax number	01228 607509
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Doug Hulme
		Headteacher	Mr John Turner
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	14–15 September 2006	289263

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is very different from how it was at the last inspection. The vast majority of pupils now come from Botcherby with very few pupils being brought to the school from outside the area. As a result, the characteristics of the school have changed significantly in the last three years. The area is socio-economically well below average which is reflected in the fact that more than half the pupils are eligible for free school meals. More than a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, half of which have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Most of the remainder have general learning difficulties. Almost all the pupils are White British. In the last three years, the school roll has fallen so the school is smaller than average, resulting in small year groups, a reduction in teaching staff and the reorganisation of the school. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school other than at the start and end of term is broadly average. However, the proportion varies significantly from class to class. Few pupils have any educational experience before they join the Nursery so attainment on entry is well below that which is typical for most three-year-olds.

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, but improving school. In 2005, the school quite rightly recognised that pupils' achievement was not good enough. Led by the headteacher and governors, the school launched a very thorough review of all aspects of its work. This resulted in the introduction of new approaches to managing pupils' behaviour, marking work, assessing and monitoring the quality of provision, all designed to meet the increasingly demanding personal and learning needs of the pupils. The effectiveness of the review is reflected by inspection evidence which confirms virtually all aspects of the school's evaluation of its own work. The only exception is that inspectors judge the school's capacity to improve as satisfactory rather than good. This is because the new procedures, though having a positive effect on pupils' progress, are not yet fully embedded in the day-to-day work of the school.

Inspectors judge that current pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. The quality of provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Despite pupils making steady progress throughout the school, standards are below average. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Parents agree with their children that they enjoy school, but there is a small group of parents who do not make sure that their children attend school often enough, so attendance overall is below average. Most pupils behave well, but there is a small group whose behaviour is not always good enough both in lessons and towards others. In addition, some pupils find it hard to work with others without close supervision by an adult. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe and the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. They make a positive contribution to the school community. Pupils develop secure basic literacy and numeracy skills, but their ability to apply these skills in different situations is less well developed. Nevertheless, when they leave the school they are in a secure position to move on to the next part of their education.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan lessons carefully and use questions well, but do not always apply the new approaches to behaviour management and marking rigorously enough. This affects the pace of lessons and does not ensure that pupils consistently follow up on the guidance they are given. Good assessment procedures track pupils' progress well and set them clear learning goals, but pupils are not involved in this so they do not know what they need to do to get better. The curriculum is sound and is well enhanced by extra-curricular activities, but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to plan their own work or to work independently and in groups. Governors are very effective and are the driving force behind the school. Together with the headteacher, they have a clear vision for the school which underpins its satisfactory capability for further improvement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance.
- Ensure that the new approaches to marking and managing behaviour are implemented consistently and rigorously across the school.

- Extend the tracking and assessment procedures to involve pupils in setting and reviewing their own learning.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to plan their own work, to use their basic skills to express their own ideas and opinions and to work collaboratively with others.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. However, a few of the pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties are not doing as well as they could because they are not always focused enough in lessons. From a well below average starting point, pupils make steady progress in the Foundation Stage, although standards are still below those expected at the end of Reception. They make good progress in their personal and social development. Pupils make steady progress in Key Stage 1, although standards in Year 2 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The work the school has done to improve pupils' progress is beginning to have a positive effect. For example, boys are now making similar progress to girls except in writing, although the gap is narrowing.

Standards and achievement for pupils in Year 6 have varied considerably over the last three years, mainly due to variations in the different groups, but in 2005 pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory with well below average standards. Currently, standards in Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science largely due to the above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in a group of 15 pupils. Inspection evidence shows that pupils now make satisfactory progress, although it is not as good in writing as in reading and number. Lower attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily, although few are working at the levels expected for their age. In addition, some do not attend school enough. Higher attaining pupils on the other hand are reaching their potential and working at levels above those expected for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most pupils behave well, but there is a minority of pupils whose behaviour towards others is not always good enough which is reflected in the relatively high rate of exclusions in the last year. In addition, there are a number of pupils in each class who find working together in groups without an adult difficult. Attendance is below average and has not improved since the previous inspection. This is due to a group of parents who do not ensure their children attend enough. 'Late gate' checks show that punctuality is improving. As they move up the school, pupils take more responsibility for each other, such as becoming a 'playground friend'. Pupils show a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. They take

full advantage of a good range of sporting activities after school and support the school council's healthy eating tuck shop at break times. Class councils enable pupils to make a positive contribution to the community and to develop skills that will help them in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In all classes, teachers structure lessons well and share the aims of lessons with pupils so they know what they will be learning about. Most lessons begin with good, brisk opening discussions and teachers frequently use information and communication technology (ICT) well to capture pupils' attention and interest. Teachers also use questions well to involve pupils in lessons and to check their understanding. A new marking policy has considerably improved the quality of feedback pupils are given about their work. When supported in class and in small groups by skilled teaching assistants, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved in lessons and make steady progress despite their difficulties. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils follow the guidance they are given which reduces the effect on pupils' learning. The recently introduced systems to manage pupils' behaviour work well much of the time, but there are occasions when teachers do not reinforce them rigorously enough and are prepared to accept inappropriate levels of inattention from some pupils. As a result, the pace of class discussions frequently slows because teachers have to repeat explanations or go over ground a second time for those pupils who were not listening properly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of the vast majority of pupils. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage enables children to develop their skills in the six areas of learning. Quite rightly, the emphasis is on developing children's personal and social development and providing plenty of collaborative play activities to promote children's language skills. Across the school, the curriculum enables pupils to develop secure basic literacy and numeracy skills. There remains more scope for pupils to be provided with activities that require them to plan their own work, to use their basic skills to express their own ideas and opinions through their writing and to work collaboratively with others. The curriculum is enhanced well by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are taught how to keep healthy and safe through the school's good programme of personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is right to consider that it provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for its pupils. Pastoral care is strong. Staff have a good understanding of the pupils' needs, they know the pupils well and they work effectively with parents and external agencies to overcome a range of social challenges. The school works very closely with external agencies, to follow up non-attendance and to promote the importance of good attendance with parents. The 'Breakfast Club' gives a good start to the day for some pupils. The school safeguards its pupils well. Child protection procedures are thorough and regularly reviewed. Procedures to re-integrate excluded pupils back into school are good.

In the last year, well planned systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' academic performance and progress have been put in place for Years 1 to 6. These give teachers a clear overview of how pupils are doing and where they should be by the end of the year. However, pupils are not involved in this process so they are not clear about what is expected of them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory, although there are clear strengths that underpin the capacity of the school to improve. The school's extensive evaluation of its work has resulted in an action plan that is very thorough, encapsulates a whole school vision and sets a clear framework for improvement. All staff share this vision. A number of the action plan's priorities have been introduced in the last two terms and it is to the credit of staff that already there are signs that they are having a positive effect on school ethos and pupils' progress, particularly that of boys and higher attaining pupils. Procedures for monitoring the effect of the improvement plan are systematic and clearly linked to improving standards. Subject leaders are involved in this, but at present their role is at an early stage. Governors are the driving force behind the monitoring of the action plan and have high expectations of all the staff. However, they recognise that there is still some way to go in achieving a fully consistent and rigorous whole-school approach to all the aspects of teaching and learning.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

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	3
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	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

To the Pupils of:

St Cuthbert's Catholic School and Nursery

Victoria Road

Botcherby

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA1 2UE

14 September 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed spending time with you, sharing in your lessons and talking to you about your work. We think that your school is providing you with a sound education, but there are some things it needs to do to help you even more.

We think most of you are making satisfactory progress in learning new ideas and skills. Your teachers plan lessons carefully and give you good support in lessons. We have asked them to provide you with more opportunities to plan your own work, to use your reading, writing and number skills and to work together in groups. They also need to give you more opportunities to improve your work after it has been marked and to involve you more in discussing how well you are doing and what you need to work on to get better. We were pleased with the systems that your school has introduced to manage your behaviour in lessons and around the school. These systems are not always implemented well enough, however, and a few of you do not help your teachers and classmates by talking or fiddling with things when your teachers and each other are talking. There are also a few of you who do not attend school enough which affects how well you learn. This needs to change. We think that the governors are very committed to improving your school and that, together with the staff, they have a clear understanding of how good your school is and what they need to develop further.

Thank you once again for helping us with the inspection and we wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

A MargerisonS Jeffray

Lead InspectorTeam Inspector