

# St Bede's RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	114284
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	289866
Inspection dates	14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Mrs Kathryn Dodd

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

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Firbank
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	May 2001
School address	Kingsway Thompson Street East Darlington County Durham DL1 3ES
Telephone number	01325 466411
Fax number	01325 241755

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Almost all the pupils attending this average size school are from White British family backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. When children start Nursery, their attainment is broadly in line with that found typically. The school holds the ActiveMark and Healthy Schools' accreditations.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards in English, teaching and learning, the provision of academic guidance and the quality of leadership and management at all levels. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, the school's own records of pupils' standards and progress, pupils' previous work in writing and the school's plans for further improvement. Brief observations of lessons were made in each class, accompanied by the headteacher. Discussions with leaders, staff, governors and pupils were held, and the parents' questionnaires were reviewed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## 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 an accurate view of its own effectiveness. It offers a high quality for education for all its pupils and provides good value for money. The strong sense of belonging to the St Bede's family underpins all aspects of school life. In this very warm and caring setting, pupils achieve well and their personal development is outstanding. It is no surprise, therefore, that so many parents think very highly of the school. They say how proud they are that their children attend – because the school 'brings out the very best' in their children.

When children join the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes), their attainment is broadly typical for their age. In these classes, teachers and support staff work together very effectively. They carefully check children's progress and provide a wonderful range of activities that are well matched to the needs of each and every child. This, along with the priority given to children's personal, social and emotional development, ensures that they settle quickly into school and develop a love of learning. As a result of good teaching and learning between Years 1 and 6, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. In the 2006 national tests at the end of Year 6, pupils reached well above average standards in mathematics and science. In English, however, standards were average. Leaders have identified, correctly, that the rate at which pupils make progress in English, particularly in writing, can be accelerated. As a result of swift and decisive action, school data suggest that more pupils than in 2006 are on track to reach higher levels of attainment in English tests this year.

The pupils make greatest gains in their learning in Years 5 and 6. In these classes, teachers provide work that consistently challenges pupils of all capabilities, particularly those who are capable of reaching a level of attainment higher than expected for their age. Teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils, and rarely overlook opportunities to encourage pupils to 'up-level' their work. Furthermore, the high quality of marking and the setting of challenging targets with pupils, especially in writing, ensure that pupils in these classes have a good understanding of how well they are progressing and what they need to learn next. These practices are not yet adopted consistently in all classes, where the more capable pupils could sometimes achieve more. Nevertheless, good organisation, interesting and purposeful activities that enthuse pupils, along with positive relationships between teachers and pupils, are strong features of most of the teaching and learning.

Making sure that pupils enjoy learning, are safe and healthy and make a positive contribution to their community has high priority in the curriculum. This is seen through a wonderful range of exciting activities on offer in lessons and beyond the normal school day, particularly in music, sport and art and design. This is one of the reasons why pupils talk with such enthusiasm about school life. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school, behave extremely well and flourish in self-confidence and maturity. This outstanding personal development, along with good academic progress, is why they are so well placed to do well at secondary school and to become responsible citizens.

Key to this success is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher who, in pursuit of excellence, is driven to ensure that every child is nurtured in a very caring and supportive environment. Although she has successfully sustained the school's track record of high standards and outstanding personal development, she continually strives to achieve even more. Making sure that everyone shares in her vision with equal determination and are suitably skilled to deliver such a high quality of education is never off her agenda. As a result, well focused and concise improvement plans provide clear accountability. Staff who have recently taken on additional leadership responsibilities are keen to make a greater contribution to support the headteacher. They know that their next step is to ensure that they make greater use of information collected about pupils' progress, so that they find out for themselves just how good the school is. They want to pinpoint where teaching, learning or the curriculum can be fine-tuned.

Nevertheless, this is a school that knows itself well, accurately identifies its strengths, and is never afraid to say where it can do even better. The good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the Foundation Stage, and the rigour with which weaknesses in pupils' achievement in writing are currently being addressed, demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve in the future.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that leaders and managers make more effective use of information about pupils' progress and standards in order to contribute more fully to improving provision and raising standards.
- Make sure that teachers consistently plan and provide work that challenges pupils' thinking, particularly those who are capable of reaching the higher levels of attainment.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

## Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	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	1
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 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

## Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

<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.

15 June 2007



Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bede's RC Primary School, County Durham, DL1 3ES

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of your St Bede's 'family', and you helped me to see why you enjoy coming to school so much. You answered all my questions very thoughtfully. I particularly enjoyed seeing so many of you playing musical instruments, performing in the school choir and singing so joyfully in assembly. You are very lucky to have lots of chances to take part in so many exciting activities. All the adults care a great deal about you and give you lots of encouragement to do well and to grow in confidence. I was very impressed with how well you all look after one another; you are so kind and caring and your behaviour is really good all the time. No wonder you feel very safe in your school and are proud of it.

Your school is a good school. You do well in your learning, and the school makes sure that you are well prepared for going to secondary school at the end of Year 6. Your headteacher works very hard indeed to make sure that everyone helps with making things even better for you. Adults help you to do as well in English, particularly in writing, as you do in mathematics and science.

However, there is still more that can be done. This is why I have asked your school to make sure that:

- your work is never too easy for you and always gives you the chance to show what you are really capable of, so that you reach your targets more quickly
- it keeps a close check on how well you are learning and whether you might be able to do even better.

You can help by:

- making sure that you tell your teacher if your work is too easy
- checking all the time what you still have to do to reach your targets
- continuing to try your very best in everything that you do.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Dodd  
Lead inspector