

# St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122308
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	292366
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Karen Ling

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>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	184
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michael Brannigan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Michael White
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2003
<b>School address</b>	Ridge Terrace Bedlington Northumberland NE22 6EQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01670 822389
<b>Fax number</b>	01670 829285

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<b>Age group</b>	3–9
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized first school situated in the small town of Bedlington. Pupils attending the school come from a range of economic and social backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds. A small number of pupils are from the nearby Traveller community. As many of these pupils move from time to time with their families, changes to the school population during the year are higher than in most schools. There is a very small proportion of pupils of other minority ethnic or mixed heritage. The number of pupils eligible to claim free school meals has doubled in recent years and is now above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need.

## 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 school. It works well in partnership with parents and outside agencies to help pupils overcome any barriers to learning they may have. The parents of children who attend have high regard for the dedication of the headteacher and his staff. Pupils are well mannered and behaviour is good. The ethos of the school is one of care and consideration for each other and relationships at all levels are good. This contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being which are good. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school. They learn about keeping themselves safe, know what is needed for a healthy lifestyle and benefit from regular exercise. The following comment from a parent reflects the views of many, 'Every child is treated with respect and compassion.'

The Foundation Stage provides a good quality of education in all areas of its provision. Children are happy and see learning as fun. They make good progress and by the end of Reception class achieve standards which are in line with the targets for their age. The good teaching and care provided by adults helps children to achieve well because they feel secure and confident in their surroundings. The interesting and varied curriculum provides a good foundation for Key Stage 1.

Pupils make satisfactory progress across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The standards they reach by the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average and by Year 4, pupils attain standards in line with those expected for their age. Teaching and learning across the school is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a warm and caring approach towards pupils and work hard to manage the wide range of pupils' abilities. However, staff do not maximise opportunities for pupils to build on their knowledge through independent learning activities during lessons. Teachers help pupils to recognise what they need to do to improve their work. However, at times, expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough and teachers' monitoring of the quality of pupils' work, the process of setting targets and marking are not consistent. As a result pupils do not always achieve to the best of their ability.

Three areas were highlighted for improvement at the last inspection. Despite limited space in the room housing the computers, effective steps have been taken to improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils show increasing skill in using computers and their learning is enhanced where interactive whiteboards are used well in lessons. The school has also addressed the need to incorporate more investigative science within the curriculum. As a result, the science curriculum is now satisfactory. Staff are beginning to use assessment diligently to inform their planning. However, more needs to be done to ensure that pupils' progress is monitored and tracked consistently.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The school knows its strengths and has accurately identified and prioritised areas for improvement. Staff work well as a team, although the role of coordinators is yet to be fully developed. Systems in place for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are not rigorous. Consequently improvement in provision does not happen speedily.

The governing body is supportive and members actively develop their knowledge of the school and governance skills through attending training events and making regular visits to the school. Shared commitment of the staff, the headteacher and governors, their dedication to the pupils along with the improvements made since the last inspection, indicate that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve in the future.

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**

- Monitor and evaluate the school's performance more effectively to ensure a faster pace of improvement.
- Raise expectations of what pupils are capable of so that pupils achieve the best they can.
- Improve marking and the development and use of individual learning targets so that pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Maximise opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Children enter the Nursery with a range of skills typical for their age. The school reports that an increasing proportion of children are entering the school with weak language skills. In 2006 almost half of the children joining the Reception Year came from other local nursery provision or had no previous nursery experience. This is unusual for the school and is reflected in the lower attainment on entry for some of this year's cohort. Provision is good across the Foundation Stage. Good teaching and carefully planned activities are effective in encouraging language development. As a result, children of all abilities make good progress and many enter Year 1 having reached most of the expected learning goals for that age group.

Standards at Key Stage 1 are broadly average. The school's best Key Stage 1 results in 2003 were followed by a period which showed a downward trend. The 2006 results indicated a recovery when assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 were in line with the national average. An increased proportion of pupils reached the higher level in reading and mathematics. Fewer pupils achieved as well in writing. This indicates that overall groups of pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Effective support ensures that those pupils from the Traveller community, whose attendance is interrupted at times, make satisfactory progress over time. The same is true of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 4, the vast majority of pupils reach the standard expected for their age and a small proportion exceed it. However, across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 some pupils do not do as well as they should because expectations are not high enough.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils like coming to school because they enjoy learning and appreciate the camaraderie of their friends. They cooperate well and are supportive of one another. They respect their teachers and mostly concentrate well, although their pace of work is not always brisk. Behaviour is essentially good. Pupils speak of occasional aggressive behaviour but feel secure, and their parents express few concerns. Attendance is average.

Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities for physical activity, and know it is good for their health. They are also increasingly opting for a healthy diet. They have good involvement in the local community. Activities, such as tree planting, enhance and strengthen pupils' sense

of citizenship. Links with the wider world are limited and, as a result, pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is less well developed. Pupils benefit from visits to and performances in the church to support their spiritual development.

The school values pupils' opinions. Their views were canvassed, for example, with regard to the adventure playground. The school is only just beginning to establish a school council to provide a structured system for pupils to express their views and have them heard. Good social skills and satisfactory basic skills mean that pupils have sound preparation for life ahead.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with strengths in the Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 2, teaching is sometimes good but is mainly satisfactory. Lessons have clear objectives so pupils know what they need to learn. New learning is frequently enhanced by the use of interactive whiteboards. Teachers mostly manage pupils skilfully to ensure good concentration. Different work is set for pupils of different abilities but, as pupils themselves say, it is not consistently challenging. In addition, the atmosphere in lessons is sometimes flat, so the pace of learning suffers.

Teaching assistants support pupils sympathetically in groups, but are not always deployed effectively when the teacher is talking to the whole class. Pupils appreciate the advice they receive from staff in lessons on how to improve their work, but teachers' marking is not detailed enough to show pupils how they can improve.

In the Foundation Stage, teaching is good and the varied curriculum provides for the needs of all groups of pupils. Pupils develop a good degree of independence and learn to use their initiative well. Their behaviour is good. Teachers are very good at helping pupils to think for themselves and work things out. Support staff make a valuable contribution towards pupils' learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school follows programmes of work that ensure all subjects have a suitable framework and learning is progressive. Exciting and purposeful activities in the Foundation Stage give pupils a good start to school. The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2, is not so interesting, although it is enriched by visits and visitors, such as a storyteller. Teachers are increasingly linking subjects to raise basic skills in literacy and numeracy. However, staff do not systematically ensure that pupils are provided with appropriate opportunities to use basic skills as well as they could do.

All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through well focused learning plans. Traveller pupils benefit from regular specialist support. Good links with outside agencies provide expertise, such as speech therapy, for pupils with specific needs. Teachers provide some scope for pupils to develop independent learning skills, but this is not a regular enough part of classroom activities

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Care and support for pupils are satisfactory. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils fully meet government requirements. Staff are all trained in first aid and risk assessments are always undertaken before school visits, for example. Pastoral care is good. Teachers are approachable and pupils feel secure and valued.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has good new systems to monitor pupils' progress which are beginning to enable teachers to pinpoint clearly pupils who may be underachieving and so provide help. However, teachers do not consistently give pupils individual learning targets that are challenging enough and that show pupils precisely what they need to do to improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The positive comments recorded by parents are testimony of their support for the school and contentment that their children are happy at the school. The school is in need of some refurbishment, but nonetheless, resources are adequate and the school is satisfactorily staffed.

The governing body is supportive of the school and fulfils its statutory duties. Governors are sufficiently well-informed about what is happening in the day to day life of the school. New governors receive induction training on the Every Child Matters agenda and are helped to become familiar with the provision in school. However, governors do not always receive the necessary information required to challenge the school effectively about outcomes for pupils. For example, although senior staff have an accurate picture of the school's general strengths and weaknesses, its self-evaluation systems lack rigour.

The school knows what it needs to do to improve and has prioritised areas for development in the school improvement plan. However, monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is not fully effective so the pace of improvement is uneven.

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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>	<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>	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	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<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	2
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	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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>	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	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**

26 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Northumberland, NE22 6EQ

Do you remember when I came to visit your school recently with Mr Scott? We came to see how well you were doing. Thank you for being so helpful and courteous. We really enjoyed talking with you and joining your lessons. We were very interested to hear about the things you do and what you think about your school.

We think that the school provides you with a satisfactory education and we found some good things out about your school. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy coming to school. Your behaviour is good and you get along well with each other and adults. All of your teachers are very caring and children in the Foundation Stage get a really good start to school life. You clearly enjoy physical activity. I saw many happy faces in the Reception class and heard lots of giggles as you exercised to music with your teacher. We are so pleased to see that you are learning about what is good for your health. You work well in most lessons, but we think you can be helped by your teachers to do even better.

We have asked your teachers to make sure you understand how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve, when they mark your work. We also think you could have more opportunities to develop independent learning skills during lessons.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to make improvements to your achievement so that all of you reach the higher levels of work you are capable of. We have also asked them to improve the way the school checks on its work and takes actions to make things better.

Well done everyone. Remember to always make every effort to do your best for yourself, each other and for your school.

Best wishes

Karen Ling

Lead inspector