

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108500
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	309710
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Samways
Headteacher	Mrs Pat Hall
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	The Green Walbottle Village Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE15 8JL
Telephone number	0191 2675956
Fax number	0191 2675956

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Cuthbert's is smaller than the average primary school. Nearly all pupils are from a White British heritage. Fewer than 10% are from other white backgrounds; 6 pupils speak English as an additional language, all of whom have joined the school this term. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is a very small number of pupils 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: 1

This is an outstanding school. Excellent care, guidance and support create a secure, happy, family atmosphere where pupils achieve well in all areas of their development. When children start in Reception, their overall skills are below what is typical for their age. By the end of Year 2 pupils have made good progress from their starting points and reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to progress well, especially in Years 5 and 6, to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.

The quality of teaching and of the curriculum is good; in Years 5 and 6 teaching is often better than this. Teachers assess pupils' needs very well and adapt the curriculum so that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Teaching is well planned to interest and motivate pupils and ensure that they develop a lively interest in learning. Pupils work hard and enjoy the varied activities in and out of the classroom. They develop many excellent personal qualities during their time in school. They show great tolerance, respect and care for each other and give a very warm welcome to pupils who join the school. They know how to stay safe and healthy. Behaviour is excellent and pupils learn in a calm and happy classroom. Pupils relish opportunities to take responsibility and make improvements to the school as the lovely gardens and the recycling projects testify. They are extremely well prepared for the future with good basic skills, a thirst for learning and the confidence to have a go.

The school is well led and managed. Very good leadership by the headteacher ensures that the work of the school is firmly focused on meeting the needs of the individual child. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and underpins successful improvement, for example to standards and the curriculum since the last inspection. The school is well placed to continue to improve. Staff and governors are involved in monitoring the work of the school and in supporting improvement. However, since the last inspection there has been a reduction in the senior leadership team, which has placed an inappropriate workload upon the headteacher.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is led well. Learning is planned so that children make good progress from their starting points at the beginning of Reception. Good links with parents ensure that the children feel secure and happy in school and are well prepared for learning. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to children's learning, especially in the development of reading and social skills. Children are prepared well for the next stage of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the leadership structure to achieve a more even distribution of the work associated with leading the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average at the end of Year 6 and pupils' achievement is good. Children in the Reception class reach the goals set for their learning. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 show standards are broadly average and are improving especially in mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 reach above average standards in English,

mathematics and science. The results of the 2007 national tests for Year 6 pupils were the best the school has achieved in recent years, with all pupils achieving the expected level in mathematics and science and the vast majority reaching the expected level in English. The school's challenging targets were exceeded at both levels in all subjects. Science results were particularly good with 80% of pupils exceeding the expected level. Standards of work in information and communication technology (ICT) and art seen during the inspection were above the levels expected nationally.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language benefit from well organised support and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school, as their excellent attendance testifies and they make the most of all that is on offer. They are aware of their role in improving the school, and through the school council, the Eco-committee and the gardening club, make a big difference to the quality of life for everyone in the school. From the earliest age pupils are keen to take plenty of exercise and enjoy healthy food. They take responsibility seriously and are regular fund-raisers for those less fortunate than they are. Pupils behave extremely well. They form excellent relationships and older pupils set a very good example through their caring attitudes which younger pupils are quick to follow. Of particular note is the exceptional warmth of welcome that pupils have given to others who have joined the school from Central Europe. It is clear from the way these children have integrated that they feel very comfortable in their new school and that language is not a barrier to friendship. Pupils' high standards of basic skills and good personal qualities prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 5 and 6 there is excellent teaching; in these classes pupils' rate of learning increases so that they often exceed their targets, because expectations are high and the pace of learning is brisk. All teachers make very good use of assessment to give them a clear picture of each pupil's needs. They use this knowledge well to plan tasks that interest and motivate pupils and very importantly, allow them to work independently. Pupils are able to begin work promptly because tasks are so well matched to their level and they are delighted that they can succeed on their own. It is no surprise that more than one pupil commented that 'lessons are fun'. Teaching assistants are clear about their role in supporting specific pupils and provide good support because they too know the pupils' needs well. Lesson planning is thorough, well structured and based on good subject knowledge. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their willingness to listen, contribute and assess their own work all make a significant contribution to the calm, purposeful atmosphere found in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well planned and adapted to meet the needs of all groups of pupils as well as to develop individual interests and talents. There is good provision for literacy,

numeracy and ICT. There has been good improvement to a number of subjects since the last inspection in response to pupils' needs. These include writing, where standards have risen; and to the Foundation Stage curriculum, where a structured approach to teaching letter sounds and grammar is improving children's reading and writing skills. Provision for physical education has improved. Pupils now have more opportunities, in and out of school, for regular, vigorous exercise. The school makes good provision for personal, social and health education, so that pupils are well aware of how to stay healthy and safe, how to form good relationships and to care for each other. The curriculum is well enriched both within and beyond the classroom. Pupils very much enjoy the many after school clubs, visits, visitors and residential trips that the school provides as work on display and attendance at clubs testify. The school makes good links with other schools to extend and enrich curriculum provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding because of the headteacher's commitment to providing for the needs of the individual child. She is fully supported in this vision by staff who form excellent, caring relationships with pupils and make their time in school happy, secure and successful. Midday staff make a valuable contribution to the well-being of all pupils. The school goes to great lengths to make sure that all pupils' needs are met. Very effective assessment and tracking procedures support pupils so that they make good progress. Pupils' involvement in assessing their own and other's work strengthens their knowledge of how to improve and spurs them on to do better. There are good procedures for identifying pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they are quickly given the support they need to learn well alongside their peers. Good links with external agencies and with parents add to the good quality support given in school, so that these pupils make the same good progress as others. The school's response to changing needs is excellent. Pupils recently joining the school with English as an additional language have been very well integrated and are making good progress in spoken and written English. Arrangements for safeguarding and health and safety are robust and well managed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides very good leadership for raising standards in all areas of the school's work. She is well supported by all staff who support pupils to meet challenging targets, which are based on realistic assessment of what they can achieve. Staff and governors are involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's work and in contributing to improvements. The school's evaluation is accurate and identifies the most important areas for improvement. Good improvement to provision and standards since the last inspection indicate the school's good capacity for improvement. Changes in staffing at a senior level since the last inspection have placed an inappropriate burden of work on the headteacher as the only senior leader. Governors are supportive of the school and bring a range of expertise to its service. They are proud of the school's high standing in the community. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and praise highly the care and guidance given to their children. They are rightly pleased with the progress their children make and many expressed gratitude for the support that teachers give.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's RC Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne,

NE15 8JL

Thank you all for your warm and friendly welcome during my recent visit. I am very grateful to you for helping find out about your good school. I learned that yours is a good school. You all work hard because you enjoy school and know that you can succeed. I found out that your teachers and parents are very proud of you because of your excellent attendance, extremely good behaviour, the way you care for each other and for the good progress you make in your learning. I was very impressed by the way you help each other out if someone gets stuck. Your hard work and your good personal skills are preparing you very well for the future.

It was good to see how you work to improve your school. Your teachers value the things you do to make classrooms tidy and well organised, while the school council, eco-committee and gardening club work hard to improve what the school offers, and help to protect the planet. It was good to hear that some of you sample the lovely vegetables grown in the school garden. Seeing you all running about so fast in the playground certainly showed me how fit you are.

One thing that really struck me as exceptional in your school is the way that you welcome children from other schools and countries. Your friendly support and care make a big difference to how quickly these children settle into school and begin to enjoy it. It isn't always easy to mix with new people, especially if they don't speak your language, but you are not afraid of the challenge.

The one thing I have suggested that the school needs to do to help it get better is to make sure that staff and governors look at how the management structure can be improved upon. Thank you again for making my work such a pleasure and my very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector