

# St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Chester-le-Street

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 114242        |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Durham        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 311528        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 30 June 2008  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Gianna Ulyatt |

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>                     | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 248  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr John Lines  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Clare Swales   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 June 2005  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Ropery Lane<br>Chester le Street<br>County Durham<br>DH3 3PH |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 0191 3882305   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 0191 3894082   |

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|--------------------------|--------------|
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of new leadership in the school
- achievement and attainment in English
- assessment and tracking procedures.

Evidence was gathered from the school's performance data and other documentation including the school's self-evaluation, observations of teaching and learning, evaluations of children's activities, parents' questionnaires and discussions with children, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

The school is above average in size. It serves an area where socio-economic conditions are favourable and very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school population is stable. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds; all pupils speak English at home. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national 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 with outstanding features. Due to the strong leadership of the new headteacher, recent changes are already ensuring that high standards are being maintained. The partnerships the school has with various agencies support pupils' academic progress and personal development well. Parents fully appreciate the relationship the school has with them. The majority are delighted with the progress their children make. One parent, reflecting many others, explained, 'We receive a newsletter each week which keeps parents informed of what is going on within the school. Teaching is very good and my child is making good progress.'

Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are above those typical for this age group. They make good progress and most children exceed the level expected for their age by the end of the Reception year. Good progress continues from Year 1 to Year 6. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach exceptionally high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' assessments show this has been the case for a number of years. Results of national tests by the end of Year 6 have been significantly above average in mathematics and science, and above average in English. Current pupils are on course to achieve well in mathematics and science and overall standards are well above average. However, standards in English are lower because the more able pupils do not always make enough progress in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are effectively supported to help them achieve well.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. Pupil behaviour is outstanding. In their time at school, pupils become very well rounded individuals extremely well prepared for the future. They are very comfortable with themselves and have a high self-esteem. They thoroughly enjoy their education and are responsive and eager to learn. It is not a surprise that attendance is above average. Pupils have a strong compassion for those less fortunate than themselves. They are very good at looking after others. Pupils have a very active lifestyle complemented by a sensible approach to diet. They thoroughly enjoy the activities provided during 'Healthy Week'. Lunchboxes are nutritious and wholesome. Older pupils are highly responsible; as one pupil explained, 'We are the oldest in the school and therefore we have to set a good example for younger ones.' All pupils rise to the expectation that they will help with the smooth running of the school and conscientiously carry out the various jobs allocated to them. The pro-active school council has improved the quality of the tuck shop by selling healthy Fair Trade produce.

Pupils' learning is so successful because teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. A very clear understanding about what pupils know and can do enables teachers to plan activities to match learning needs. As a result, pupils approach their learning with complete confidence and a feeling that they will be successful. Good use is made of technology to make lessons interesting and improve learning. The strong relationship between all staff and pupils creates a calm but happy atmosphere which encourages pupils to achieve well. Teachers ensure pupils understand the purpose of their tasks so that they are aware of what is expected of them. Classrooms and corridors are a strong testament to the caring and creative attention teachers give to ensuring the school environment supports learning and values pupils' achievement. Pupils particularly enjoy mathematics because the challenge is very high. Pupils say, 'We love maths because it gets our brains working.' The challenge is not always as strong for the more able pupils in writing.

The good curriculum includes a wide variety of activities that offer pupils many very valuable experiences. Pupils say there is much to do in the school to promote individual talents. They thoroughly enjoy playing the guitar, creating pictures through Japanese art, partaking in sporting events, dancing or singing in the choir. Strong links with international schools widen pupils' horizons. They are delighted when letters arrive from pupils who live in far off countries. Pupils say they really enjoy special events throughout the year, such as the International Day and World Book Day. Clubs after school are plentiful and residential weeks, for adventurous outdoor activity, promote independence and self-reliance. The school offers satisfactory care, guidance and support. Safeguarding procedures are in place and staff are well trained in systems to check on pupils' safety.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and most of the senior team are new to the school. The entire team collaborates well and has a strong vision for the school to sustain high standards. Towards this end, provision has been analysed and the school has an accurate view of the areas needing further attention. For example, the improvement in the tracking of pupils' progress means that challenging targets are set that are clear to both teachers and pupils. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are knowledgeable and challenge the school's work. However, they did not respond quickly enough to concerns from parents about recent building alterations. Nevertheless, governors are very loyal and supportive of the school. The school is well placed to continue to be successful and offers good value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Effective leadership ensures that the Reception class is an exciting place to learn. Activities, both indoors and outside, are interesting and motivate children to learn. Additional improvements to the outdoor area are under way through a recent building programme. Very effective induction procedures ensure children settle quickly to school routines. Parents say their children are very happy in school. Teaching is good. The basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are given a high priority and, as a result, children make good progress and most exceed the standards expected and are well prepared for Year 1.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- To further improve standards in writing especially for the more able pupils in Key Stage 2.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b> | <b>School Overall</b> |
|--|-----------------------|

### 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> | 2   |
| 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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 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   | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |
| 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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 2 |
| <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>                                       | 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  | 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  |



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**Annex B**

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

30 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Chester-le-Street,  
Durham, DH3 3PH

Thank you so much for making me welcome when I visited your school. You go to a good school because everyone works to help you learn well and make good progress. These are the things I particularly like about your school.

- Your personal development is excellent. I like the way you care about each other and make sure no one is left out at playtimes. Your behaviour is outstanding and I know the school is very proud of you. You show great care for those who have very little in life.
- You work hard and listen closely to your teachers because whenever a question is asked many hands shoot up to answer. The work in your books shows how you try to always do your best. You reach high standards. The displays of your art and design technology are beautiful.
- You know how to keep very healthy. I know this because you thoroughly enjoy sport. You eat well and know exactly what you need to do to stay fit.

I have asked the school to make sure that standards in writing improve so that they become as good as those in science and mathematics.

I hope you enjoy your secondary school as much as you enjoy St Cuthbert's and that you will achieve your ambitions.

With best wishes

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector