

St Cuthbert's RC Junior and Infant (NC) School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103470
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323835
Inspection date	4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	255
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Devany
Headteacher	Patrick Doohan
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Gumbleberrys Close off Cotterills Lane Stechford Birmingham B8 2PS

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	4 March 2009
Inspection number	323835

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- The progress children make in the Nursery and Reception classes, especially in relation to their communication skills and personal development.
- The impact of teaching, the curriculum and academic guidance on the achievement of the most able pupils, especially in mathematics throughout the school.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with leaders, the chair of governors and another member of the governing body, pupils and staff; visits to most classes, analysis of pupils' work, scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements, observations of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime, and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school with a large Early Years Foundation Stage, which provides morning and afternoon Nursery sessions and a Reception class. The majority of pupils are of White British origin. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. There is on-site provision for a breakfast club, run by the governing body. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and the Physical Activity Award.

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 which provides an excellent education for its pupils. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent and enables children to get off to a very good start. The school has the overwhelming support of parents. One parent, representative of many, accurately wrote, 'The school has created an excellent environment in which children learn and grow spiritually, emotionally and academically.' Children are very well known to staff. Parents rightly expressed their gratitude for the extremely high levels of care, support and guidance offered not just to children, but also to their families.

Pupils feel extremely safe, secure and happy, and treat others with great respect. Whilst attendance is broadly average, there are very few persistent absentees in comparison to similar schools. This is because children love coming to school. They respond with interest and confidence to challenging work which supports their excellent academic achievement. Because the school values the whole range of their talents, pupils' self-esteem grows. They confidently sing solos or read lengthy stories in front of the whole school in assembly, taking great pride in their achievements. Pupils' extremely rapid progress is supported by an excellent, broad and stimulating curriculum. Specialist tuition, enrichment weeks and a wide range of clubs enhance provision, especially in music, physical education and drama. Many pupils play instruments and take part in regular dramatic and musical performances. Pupils' excellent awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle is promoted very effectively and uptake of sports activities is high. In this largely monocultural school, pupils develop a keen awareness of the range of faiths and cultures within Britain, as well as having close and productive links with the local church.

The curriculum and teaching are especially challenging in English. This enables pupils to produce written work of outstanding depth and quality. They engage in mature conversations about the quality of their work. Over a number of years, standards reached in the Year 6 national tests have consistently been well above average overall and high in English. This represents excellent achievement from pupils' below average starting points. The strategies the school has introduced in mathematics have led to significant improvements in achievement for most pupils. Achievement is not quite as good for a small number of the most able pupils, but is beginning to improve. The school's emphasis on small group and individual work ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and those at the early stages of learning English make extremely rapid progress.

Teaching is good and frequently outstanding, especially in English, where levels of expertise are high. Lessons are characterised by mutually respectful relationships, which motivate pupils to work hard. In lessons, as in all areas of school life, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a particular strength. Management of pupils' behaviour is sensitive and extremely skilful. Pupils are clearly taught right from wrong, behave extremely well and are ready to learn. Informative marking and feedback in class provide clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. In some mathematics lessons, the level of challenge for the most able pupils is not quite as high as in the best lessons. The progress of the most able pupils is slightly slower in these lessons, but this is improving as a result of very effective staff development and coaching.

Over a lengthy period, pupils at this school have achieved very well and their personal development has been excellent. This has been promoted through the outstanding guidance provided by the headteacher. His strong, caring and effective leadership is much appreciated and admired by the school community. He is supported very well by a very effective senior

team, hardworking staff and challenging and supportive governors. Teaching staff and managers are enthused and motivated by very well planned staff development. Planning is excellent and exacting and is based on a thorough and detailed knowledge of the work of the school. Because of the school's high expectations, self-evaluation is a little over-critical at times.

There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. For example, academic guidance is now excellent. Much closer monitoring of pupils' progress has enabled the school to intervene much more quickly where needed, so standards in mathematics have risen. Attendance has risen. Challenging targets have been used very well to maintain high expectations, and pupils frequently exceed them in English. Leadership and management are excellent and the school is exceedingly well placed to continue to improve.

The school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion. It makes excellent provision for the pupils in its own community, including a breakfast club in the morning, and successfully develops pupils' awareness as local and global citizens. Because the school values their efforts, pupils take their considerable responsibilities very seriously. For example, they have raised very substantial sums of money for children in Nepal over a long period and know how it has been used. Well above average standards in literacy and numeracy and excellent social skills ensure that pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent and it is extremely well led. Children settle in very quickly and enjoy their learning. This is because induction and transition arrangements are very well organised and staff are extremely sensitive to children's needs. Levels of care are very high and trusting relationships are rapidly established. Children quickly begin to develop confidence. Clear expectations are established early on. Children learn to listen attentively and to change activities quickly and without fuss. Progress is very well monitored through careful, accurate observations and excellent liaison with parents. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills that are below those expected for their age, but make excellent progress, especially in developing their communication and personal and social skills. By the time they join Year 1, standards are at least average. Achievement and personal development are excellent. The programme of activities and teaching provided meet children's needs very effectively. Indoor and outdoor activities are stimulating, well resourced and carefully organised. They provide an excellent balance between the activities planned by the teacher and those chosen and initiated by the children themselves. Children rapidly develop independence. Levels of co-operation are high and there are very well planned opportunities to inspire children to write. From the earliest age, children develop awareness and respect for the range of cultures and languages within the school community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of the most able pupils in mathematics by ensuring that they are consistently provided with appropriately demanding tasks in lessons.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

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

5 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's RC Junior and Infant School (NC), Birmingham B8 2PS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. Most of your parents replied to our questionnaire and everyone who wrote to us was delighted with the education the school provides for you! We know that you are very proud of your school as well, so you will be really pleased to hear that it provides you with an excellent education. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make excellent progress, because teaching and the programme of activities are extremely well organised. The Early Years Foundation Stage is extremely well led. Children settle in very quickly because they are very well cared for.

In Years 1 to 6, you are making excellent progress, especially in English. You are reaching well above average standards overall and really high standards in writing. Much of this is due to the hard and very well organised work of the headteacher and staff of the school. The curriculum is very well organised to meet your needs and to keep you interested. It helps that you work in such small groups, so the staff keep a close eye on the progress you are making and help you to catch up quickly if you fall behind. Marking and the guidance teachers give you in class provide you with clear information about how to improve your work. The staff take excellent care of you, making sure you are safe, that you know right from wrong, and respect and care for each other whatever background you come from.

You make a big contribution as well. You work very hard and attend regularly, because you enjoy school so much, so keep it up! You rise to the challenge when work is difficult for you. You take on a number of serious responsibilities in school and often in the wider community, for example helping children in Nepal. You take great pleasure from your involvement in music and sport and we were really impressed with your confident contributions in assembly. You treat people in school with respect and behave very well. You know a great deal about how to stay healthy and take plenty of exercise. Your well above average skills in literacy and numeracy and excellent social skills prepare you very well for the future.

In order to improve things further, we have asked the school to make sure that those of you who find mathematics easy are always given work to do which is suitably demanding. We hope that you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now.

Best wishes

Marion Thompson

Lead inspector