

St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112310
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325574
Inspection dates	23–24 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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)	147
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	Father Peter Hart
Headteacher	Miss Paula Holden
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Eastend Wigton Cumbria CA7 9HZ
Telephone number	01697 343119

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	23–24 October 2008
Inspection number	325574

Fax number

01697 349894

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school, situated in the centre of a small market town. It draws most of its pupils from a large estate of private and local authority housing. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, including pockets of disadvantage. This is reflected in an above average percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. A very small number of pupils are from traveller families and are involved in fairground life. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Close to 25% of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision, with Nursery children having morning placements.

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 where pupils benefit significantly from good partnerships with parents, the local community and outside agencies. The school provides a happy and harmonious environment where every pupil is valued highly and relationships are excellent. Care and support are outstanding. Parents are highly appreciative of what the school provides. Comments such as, 'the caring nature of the staff and pupils is wonderful and very conducive to learning', typify their views. While links with the community are promoted well within the school and locally, pupils are less aware of the diverse cultures within the United Kingdom and the wider global world.

Pupils achieve well and make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and appropriate work is planned. They receive effective support to achieve as well as their peers and to play a full part in lessons. Pupils from traveller families can access work while they are away from school. It helps them to catch up during periods of prolonged absence, when their progress slows. More able pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1. Their progress slows in Key Stage 2 in writing and mathematics.

Teaching and learning are good. Strengths include excellent relationships and high expectations in the delivery of the new approach to writing programme being delivered across the school. In Key Stage 1, practical activities and meaningful tasks are used in mathematics to actively involve pupils in solving problems and deepening their understanding. Not all teaching in mathematics is as challenging in Key Stage 2, particularly to enable the more able pupils to reach their full potential. Teachers are not providing enough opportunities for pupils to improve the quality and range of their writing sufficiently in other subjects. Although individual targets for writing and mathematics are set throughout the school pupils do not recall them easily and are not involved enough in knowing how well they are doing and are missing the opportunity to quicken their own progress.

Pupils respond well to a rich curriculum which has a positive impact on their excellent behaviour, good attitudes to learning and a clear enjoyment of school. They are building a good foundation for their future lives. Pupils know how to stay healthy and safe because of a strong commitment to their well-being. This is recognised in the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides decisive leadership and clear direction for the school and this is greatly appreciated by parents. With the good support of the deputy headteacher, strong commitment from staff and an increasingly effective governing body, they are building strongly together on the improvements made in recent years. This close teamwork is recognised in an Investors in People award. The school is well placed to improve further and gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good and children achieve well. They enter Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age, especially in communication and language. They make good progress and many are reaching the level expected of their age at the beginning of Year 1. Parents are pleased with the good start their children make and say how 'the settling-in process has been excellent'. This is due to the combined efforts of the staff, who provide a safe and

supportive learning environment. Children are happy to play on their own or with others and they thrive in an exciting, well resourced unit. Relationships are excellent and adults are always ready to capitalise on the learning. A windy day provided endless opportunities to test out windmills outdoors. The children work well with adults and independently and develop good attitudes from an early age.

Good leadership and management successfully promote close teamwork among staff to maximise children's enjoyment and learning. Staff plan together to share their good practice. Regular assessments are used to provide additional support or to give individuals greater challenge. The imaginative role-play areas are used well to extend the language skills, particularly for those children whose speech is still weak. The 'Little Red Hen' story for example, provided endless opportunities for imaginative play, retelling the story and learning letter sounds.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress of the more able pupils in mathematics and writing in Key Stage 2.
- Increase pupils' understanding of the diverse cultures in the United Kingdom and global communities.
- Involve pupils more in understanding their targets and knowing how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils start school with skills that are lower than those typical for their age and they make good progress. The standards they reach at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average. The results of the school's assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessments in 2008 show an improving trend, with an above average proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics.

Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 showed standards dipped in 2006, but they are rising again. In 2007, results were marginally above average in English and mathematics, but below average in science. Early indications show a similar picture for 2008, although science is improving. Since 2007, a good proportion of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 reached the higher Level 5 in reading and science, but fewer of them do as well in writing or mathematics.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively and make good progress. The school provides work for traveller children when they are away from school and this enables them to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and this is shown in their keenness to answer questions in lessons and their engagement during independent work. By the time they leave school, they are very caring and well adjusted citizens. Attendance levels, while broadly average, are reduced because some parents take their children away during term time. Pupils know how to lead a healthy life. They eagerly join in sporting activities during and after school. The mini skills club for Key Stage 1 pupils is very popular. Pupils speak enthusiastically about joining in the 'National walk to school week' and eating healthily at lunchtime.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour is excellent and pupils say they feel totally safe in school. Bullying and racial incidents are rare because, 'Everyone gets on well at our school.' Pupils are keen to help others, contributing to a strong school community. Older pupils use their skills from a fitness programme to instruct younger pupils. The school council has been restructured and is becoming a stronger voice in school matters. Good community links are fostered with the local area. Pupils join local clubs and the orchestra and choir often perform in the area. Pupils recognise the needs of others by leading fund-raising events for different charities. While they have some understanding of other faiths, their awareness of cultures other than their own is underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and consequently, pupils learn well. A combination of well planned lessons along with strong relationships helps pupils to work hard, learn new skills and succeed. Where teaching is most effective the pace of learning is purposeful and, through challenging questions, pupils think hard and extend their knowledge and understanding. In Year 6, high levels of discussion about the life of John Lennon resulted in pupils completing an excellent biography of the musician, with complex sentences. Working in pairs and directing their own activities, teamwork and concentration were exemplary.

Generally the teachers make good use of tracking and assessment information to plan work that closely matches the needs of all learners. However, at times in Key Stage 2 there is insufficient challenge in the work set for more able pupils in mathematics and writing. The exercises chosen from text books in mathematics sometimes fail to give the more able pupils the chance to think more deeply about solving problems and tackling investigations. This is why fewer of them learn the skills they need to reach the higher levels in their learning. Some of these pupils say they would like harder work in mathematics. Teachers do not always provide enough opportunities to write in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum serves pupils well because it is broad and well planned. A good programme of personal, social and health education has a positive impact on pupils' personal development. The school works very well with outside agencies and the local community to promote pupils' understanding of health and safety. Recently a dental hygienist and community policeman led workshops in school.

The curriculum is generally adapted well to help pupils to reach their goals, although to a lesser extent in mathematics and writing in Key Stage 2. Links are made between subjects, to make the learning more exciting but more able pupils in Key Stage 2 are not extending their skills sufficiently in writing across the curriculum. An excellent range of clubs, sporting events, educational visits and visitors, enriches the school day for pupils. It develops their skills and enjoyment as well as building positive relationships with other schools and the community. Parents and professional coaches teach different sports. Pupils also learn a foreign language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pastoral care and support are outstanding and academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils thrive and feel safe because strong Christian values nurture them to become confident and caring citizens. Parents' questionnaires overwhelmingly support this view. A skilled and experienced teaching assistant provides high quality support for the most vulnerable pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements. All staff and several governors have received regular training and the most recent information on safety matters.

Good systems are in place to track pupils' progress, address pockets of underachievement and provide the most appropriate support. Assessment and marking in the new writing project is helpful in guiding pupils towards areas for improvement. Individual targets are set for writing and mathematics, but pupils are not involved enough in knowing their targets and how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership and have made good improvements since the last inspection. The building, for example, has been successfully remodelled to make it more conducive to learning. They are very well supported by an effective team of staff, who are united in a strong sense of purpose for the school. This has led to an upward trend in standards. As most of them are involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, they have a good understanding of its strengths and the right priorities for improvements. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and the school makes good use of challenging targets in order to raise standards further.

Governance is satisfactory and improving quickly. The governing body is beginning to hold the school to account. After some initial difficulties with recruitment, there is now an almost full complement of governors. With training and a better committee structure, the governing body is much more confident about involvement in the work of the school. They have recently taken on responsibility for a class and are monitoring and evaluating issues from the school's improvement plan.

The school has a long and successful history of being at the heart of the local community. The successful partnerships with parents, outside agencies, other schools and many local organisations continues to strengthen the good community cohesion.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Cumbria, CA7 9HZ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school recently. You were all so helpful and friendly and I enjoyed talking to you all. I am writing to let you know what I found out about your school.

St Cuthbert's is a good school and you are making good progress because you are taught well. You told me how happy and safe you are at school. I can understand why, having seen you all enjoy your lessons and talk enthusiastically about clubs after school and visits you make. I was very impressed with your behaviour, which is excellent, so well done everyone. I particularly enjoyed joining you and your parents at your special assembly. It was good to see you all taking part, like one 'big family'. The Reception children were so grown up in front of everyone. When you spoke about caring for others and the environment, I know how much you meant it. Your relationships with your classmates and adults in the school are a big strength. You said your teachers are very special and how much you appreciate the outstanding support you receive from all of the staff.

Even though your school is good, your headteacher, staff and governors want to make it even better. Some of you in the junior classes said you would like harder work in mathematics. I have asked the school to give you work in mathematics that will make you think hard. You can help by telling your teachers what you like best in mathematics. Many of you told me how much you enjoy the new approach to writing. There will be more opportunities for you to try out your writing in other subjects, so that those in the junior classes can make faster progress. You receive targets for mathematics and writing, but many of you don't know what your targets are, or how to improve. The school will help you to become more involved in knowing how well you are doing. I am sure you will all work hard to reach your targets. You already meet lots of people from your local community. The school is going to give you more opportunities to learn about different communities in the United Kingdom and ways of life in the wider world, which I am sure you will all enjoy.

My very best wishes to you all for your future success!

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector