

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, New Seaham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114235
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325971
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Shepherd

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	171
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	Mr D Groark
Headteacher	Mr M McNichol
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	Mill Road Seaham County Durham SR7 0HW
Telephone number	0191 5813090
Fax number	0191 5813390

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area with mixed social and economic circumstances that are close to average. Fewer pupils are eligible to receive free school meals than usual. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average with few pupils with a full statement of special educational need. There is a small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. In the past few years there have been more pupils joining the school midway through their education and the proportion is now broadly average. There are more children entering the school with literacy difficulties than at the previous inspection. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

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. Its provision is satisfactory for academic development and it is good for personal development. Parents are very appreciative of its work. A typical comment was, 'The school ethos of respect and care for one another transpire into good behaviour and a happy environment.'

Achievement is satisfactory through the school. Standards at the beginning of Year 1 are broadly average. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 they are broadly average. This confirms the National test and assessment results. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are both satisfactory but there are variations in both of these aspects across different subjects. This results in inconsistent progress. The reading curriculum is good with productive partnerships between home and school. This extends individual pupils' reading skills well and results in higher standards. Writing progress is slower. The school does not balance the development of technical skills and independent writing effectively or take enough opportunities for promoting writing in all subjects. The science curriculum is comprehensive and pupils reach higher standards in this subject. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress but the progress of more able pupils is inconsistent and could be better. This is because the teaching and the curriculum are not always challenging enough and pupils do not fully understand how to use their individual targets to improve their work.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. This is a result of the good quality of pastoral care and support and effective partnerships within the locality. There is a strong emphasis on pupils being part of one big community. Older pupils relish the opportunities to support younger ones, which gives the younger ones confidence and the older ones good experiences of taking responsibility. The school council is a valuable part of the school and councillors are proud of the decisions that they make on behalf of their classmates. The pupils' future economic well-being is satisfactory. Their academic skills are satisfactory. They develop confidence in handling budgets through organising fund-raising and making decisions on how to spend the money. Pupils enjoy school and their behaviour is good. They have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers are effective in creating community cohesion, both in the locality and through international links. Monitoring systems are not effective enough to provide consistency across provision, resulting in different academic progress across subjects. Governance is satisfactory. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the EYFS is satisfactory. Children enter the school at levels that are close to the expected level apart from literacy, which is lower. Achievement is satisfactory overall although there are differences in progress between different aspects of the EYFS curriculum because the provision varies in quality. There is a satisfactory emphasis across the curriculum to adult led activities but not enough time is given to developing children's ability to work independently. By the end of Reception standards are broadly average. The most successful provision is in reading where children receive a balanced programme of support and they

progress well. This includes the recognition of different letter sounds and key words, matching of work to different children's needs and skilful use of all staff. Progress in writing development is much slower because there are not enough opportunities in independent learning to develop these skills. There are not enough opportunities for children to learn outdoors and this is having a negative impact on physical development. Assessment systems are cumbersome. This reduces the efficiency of the tracking of individual progress over time across the six areas of the EYFS curriculum. This is resulting in uneven development amongst children across the different areas. Leadership and management are satisfactory and ensure good levels of children's personal development and good quality care and guidance is provided.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and extend the use of writing across the curriculum.
- Improve teaching through providing more challenge for the more able pupils and checking on pupils' understanding of their individual targets.
- Improve the quality of the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Provide a balance across the EYFS curriculum in independent learning in indoor and outdoor activities.
- Improve the effectiveness of assessment in the EYFS.

A small proportion of schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a visit from an Ofsted inspector before the next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory through the school. National assessment results for 2008 for Year 2 were average overall, with a strength in reading. The inspection confirms these standards. The higher standards in reading are because when pupils were in Reception they received a well balanced curriculum and benefited from the well organised home school reading partnership. National data shows that achievement across Key Stage 2 has been satisfactory over the past three years with average standards and the inspection confirms this. After a trend of falling standards in this key stage, they began to rise in 2007. The provisional test results for 2008 in science and mathematics indicate that results are average but have continued to rise. Pupils achieved well at both the level expected for their age and the higher level. Standards remained similar in English and are broadly average, with reading levels much higher than writing. More able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and could make better progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy their learning and their behaviour is good. They are friendly, considerate and respond positively to visitors. They show respect for each other and adults and there are good relationships between pupils and staff. They have a strong sense of community with pupils supporting each other both in and outside the classroom. For example, the buddy system of Year 6 pupils partnering Reception children works really well. Pupils have a good understanding of the global community through their project with schools in Malawi and Zimbabwe. The links with the secondary school in the fair trade project are productive. Attendance is satisfactory as is pupils' future economic well-being. They

gain a good understanding of handling budgets and making decisions through their work on the effective school council but their basic skills are at a lower level and are satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers manage behaviour effectively which results in calm and orderly lessons. Teaching assistants support group work effectively and this has a positive impact on pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support for these pupils in whole class sessions is inconsistent. In some cases there is little interaction between support staff and individuals. Teachers provide individual targets for pupils but do not use them consistently enough in lessons or refer to them effectively enough when they mark pupils' work. Pupils are ready to talk to each other to extend their thinking because staff ensure there are regular opportunities to do this in lessons. In the best teaching there is a fast pace to learning, tasks are very interesting and build systematically on previous learning. On other occasions teachers miss opportunities both in whole class sessions and in group work to challenge more able pupils to reach higher levels during lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It fulfils the statutory requirements and the school is beginning to work towards providing a more relevant curriculum to match the pupils' interests. The reading curriculum is of good quality. The friendly weekly library sessions contribute well to pupils' progress. In contrast the writing curriculum does not include enough basic skills, opportunities to write in other subjects and in some classes there is too much copying rather than pupils using their own words. The science and mathematics curriculum is well balanced and the additional support provided by the school in Year 6 in these subjects has a positive impact on standards. The curriculum for the more able pupils is not consistently challenging across different subjects. The curriculum for personal development is good and provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to develop these skills. A variety of activities, visits and visitors enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Overall care, guidance and support are satisfactory, with good quality pastoral care, support and personal guidance, which contribute well to pupils' personal development and well-being. Safeguarding systems, risk assessments and health and safety systems are in place. There are good partnerships with parents and experts from the locality and this enables staff to offer informed care to pupils. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Staff use assessment information well to provide pupils with targets to improve their work. The quality of these targets varies in quality between classes and subjects. Pupils do not always have a clear understanding of what the next steps in their learning are and how their targets relate to the National Curriculum. The best targets are in science where pupils are clearer about how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders have a clear philosophy of promoting both personal and academic development. They are successful in carrying this out in personal development but are not as effective in academic development. Monitoring of teaching and learning and the curriculum is a weakness and is resulting in inconsistencies across different classes and subjects. This in turn is reducing the rate of pupils' progress through the school. The headteacher is very committed to involving the school community in the work of the school. This results in good community cohesion both with the local community, particularly the church and with the international community through the Zimbabwe and Malawi partnerships. Governors play an important role in this aspect of the school's work. Subject coordinators are enthusiastic about their roles but do not take an active enough role in monitoring their subjects. The school has made satisfactory improvements since the previous inspection and has satisfactory capacity to improve in the future.

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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?	3
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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	3

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	2
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	3

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

5 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, New Seaham,
Durham, SR7 0HW

Thank you for being so very welcoming to us when we came to your school. You were all so friendly and helpful in answering our questions. We are writing to let you know what we found out.

You go to a satisfactory school where the staff look after you well. You make steady progress as you move through the school although this varies across different subjects. Your achievement in reading and science is good, but it is not as good in writing. Your teachers are going to give you more writing to do in other subjects and help you learn the technical skills of writing more often. You can work hard to improve this aspect of your work. Your teachers make sure that your classrooms are calm places to work in and they are going to make sure that in every bit of the lesson they challenge the more able pupils to achieve better. We have asked your headteacher and the teachers to come into lessons more to watch how well you are learning, so be ready to tell them what you are finding difficult and what is easy in the lesson. We have also asked the school to check closely on the progress children make in Reception and give them more time working on their own in activities inside the classroom and to learn much more outside.

Your personal development is good. We really enjoyed finding out what your school council does and the ways that it decides on the fund-raising you are going to do and who will receive the money. You obviously enjoy your learning and your behaviour is good. We were impressed with how the older pupils look after the younger ones. You understand the importance of keeping safe and healthy and you have good links with community and with the international schools.

Yours sincerely

Maggi Shepherd

Lead inspector