

# St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Berwick

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122309
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	327695
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April –1 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Sleightholme

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	86
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michael Bassi
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Bernadette Fisher
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Prince Edward Road Tweedmouth Berwick-upon-Tweed Northumberland TD15 2EX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01289 307785

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<b>Age group</b>	3–9
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April –1 May 2009
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**Fax number**

01289 331717

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a relatively small urban school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Although the number on roll has declined the percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has risen and some of these have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen sharply and is currently above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is a unit for Nursery and Reception children.

## 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. Some aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding. 'We are more than pleased with progress and how the school is managed' is a brief written comment that typifies most parents' positive views of the school.

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual and social development are good. Their moral and cultural development and behaviour are outstanding. Pupils are happy and settled at school. They are reflective, caring and friendly young citizens who form trusting relationships with adults and each other. Pupils feel safe and know how to access help. By assuming responsibility through services, such as councillors or buddies, they are learning useful skills for their future lives. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory.

Achievement is good. Good teaching ensures pupils make good progress from low starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach average standards by Year 2. Good progress continues and by Year 4 standards are above the level expected in reading, speaking, listening and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of acquiring English are supported well; they make good progress in most basic skills. Their progress is satisfactory in writing and some aspects of science. Progress slows in these subjects because these pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to practise technical writing skills; they lack confidence in transferring their ideas into written text, including the outcomes of science experiments.

Teaching and learning are good. Confident teaching skilfully uses a variety of different methods and includes good use of interactive learning. Teaching effectively links learning between subjects. Pupils love school, especially the practical aspects of the good curriculum. A weakness of curriculum planning is that pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to apply their numeracy skills to organising and conducting mathematical investigations. Strong cultural development includes regular opportunities for pupils to visit museums, work with musicians and dancers and take part in a poetry recital competition. Pupils are provided with good care. Those identified as needing additional help, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are supported well in class and in small groups. Academic guidance to most pupils is good. It focuses well on improvement with pupils encouraged to work towards clear targets.

Leadership, management and governance are good. By utilising systematic self-review procedures leaders have an accurate picture of the school. This helps them set clear priorities for improvement. Leaders evaluated the school's changing contextual circumstances and promote community cohesion well. The school provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Although attainment on entry is variable, the number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or at a very early stage of acquiring English is rising. Consequently, starting points are well below those typically found in reading, speaking, writing, mathematical and social skills.

Personal development is good. Children are settled, friendly and behave well. They quickly learn daily routines such as the sound of the bell as the signal to tidy up. Learning and development are good because teaching is good. Effective planning ensures children access an appealing variety of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children enthusiastically learned

to count by singing the rhyme 'five currant buns' with their teacher. Indoors, children confidently managed the doctor's surgery while outdoors a group were thrilled to chase bubbles that they blew for each other into the wind. Progress is good. Despite the gains made, many children in recent years, have not reached the reading, writing and mathematical goals and consequently have entered Year 1 below average. Current Reception children, from below average starting points, are already working securely at the expected goals.

Welfare is good. Staff, who access training implement sensible daily routines consistently with each pupil allocated a key worker. Assessment practices are well established. Staff observe and record children's progress accurately compiling this information into useful 'All about Me' portfolios. Leadership is good. Practices have developed well through good teamwork and clear direction. The leadership has firm plans to increase outdoor practical experiences by providing a digging area for growing flowers and vegetables.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to provide more opportunities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to acquire the technical skills of writing.
- Improve curriculum planning so that pupils have more time to apply their numeracy skills to undertake mathematical investigations.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. Pupils usually enter Year 1 below average. For several years assessments at the end of Year 2 have been broadly average; they improved slightly in 2007 and dipped in 2008. This variation reflects the relatively small numbers in each year group, differences in the proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the number of pupils at an early stage of acquiring English.

Current standards in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. These pupils entered Year 1 with starting points that were below average and they are making good progress. Current standards in Year 4 are above the level expected in reading, speaking, listening and mathematics. They are at expected levels in writing and science. These pupils, who were assessed as average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, are making overall good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of acquiring English achieve well in most subjects because they benefit from additional support sensitively matched to their needs. Their progress in writing is slower and they lack the necessary language skills to transfer their ideas to writing. School leaders have resolutely implemented a programme to raise standards in English and mathematics by setting challenging targets, improving assessment and diligent tracking of progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are reflective. They think about topics such as justice and fairness by taking a regular lead role in organising collective worship and reading their own prayers. Pupils value keeping fit. Their enthusiasm for daily exercise and the 'Walk on Wednesday' initiative has helped the school secure the 'Healthy School' award. Pupils feel safe in this friendly caring school. They trust adults and buddies who they know will help them personally. Pupils enjoy activities especially those that provide them with the chance to do things practically. The nil returns for

exclusions, racist incidents and bullying reflect pupils' outstanding behaviour and excellent attitudes towards each other. Attendance is satisfactory. It is affected by the extended leave during term time taken by some pupils.

Pupils contribute well to the school and local community. School councillors represented pupils' views accurately when they researched and selected new outdoor equipment to a set budget. Pupils' contribution to the attractive outdoor mural helped them to acquire a good understanding of each other's backgrounds, beliefs and heritage. It is an outstanding example of their strong cultural awareness. Pupils have a good record of fundraising. Their improvement in speaking has led to success at a poetry recital competition. It typifies how they become confident and are preparing well for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Subject knowledge is good, positive relationships are established and pupils are managed well. A positive ethos permeates throughout lessons. Pupils' interest is maintained because teaching employs a variety of approaches with regular opportunities for practical work. Linking learning between subjects is a teaching strength. For example, in science, pupils' understanding of forces improved when they pushed and pulled themselves along physical education equipment supervised diligently by a teaching assistant.

Teaching has embraced initiatives to promote sustained personal writing. Currently, this is impacting positively on the progress of middle ability and more able pupils. The impact is much more patchy for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who do not always have enough opportunities to acquire and practise the technical skills of writing.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets requirements. The reorganisation of the curriculum teaching groups so that pupils can access literacy and numeracy content matched to their prior attainment is one of the successful outcomes of leadership that is contributing to good achievement. A narrowness of the programme is that a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics books reveals limited planned opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills to solving mathematical investigations.

Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum. A history enrichment day that built on a visit to a Roman fort included opportunities for pupils to research information and taste 'Roman' food. In a successful partnership with other local schools, pupils took part in a dance festival at a local theatre. This and the current Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) initiative to study a different country each month contributes to pupils' strong cultural development. Pupils have access to a good range of extra-curricular activities, some delivered through a sports partnership.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Care, support and guidance are good. Well established routines ensure pupils' health and safety. Practices for safeguarding, child protection and risk assessments are rigorously applied. Staff

know pupils individually and fine tune support to meet specific needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of acquiring English benefit from the input of skilled teaching assistants. Assistants deliver support and intervention programmes confidently and sensitively. Good links with external agents, including social services and the school nurse, enhance provision especially.

Academic guidance is good. A strength is the high profile given to setting pupils individual and group targets and the consistency of practice in each class. Pupils benefit from timely prompts in lessons, encouragement through interactive displays and comments in their books. A relative weakness is that guidance to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on how to improve writing is not as clear as in other aspects of their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership, including governance, is good. The headteacher, who provides calm, focused leadership and clear direction, is supported well by a conscientious staff. A good sense of teamwork prevails. Good outcomes are improved teaching, good achievement, better assessment practices and more rigorous monitoring. Given the overall improvements made, the school has good capacity for further improvement. Leaders' drive to provide a better range of writing opportunities has helped middle and higher ability pupils to make quicker progress in this key skill. Leaders have been less effective in addressing the needs of the increasing proportion of lower ability pupils, many of whom find translating ideas to text very challenging. Purposeful, monitoring leads to accurate self-evaluation and a clear development plan with appropriate priorities. Challenging targets are set for pupils and they are well placed to achieve them.



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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>
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### 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	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

<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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<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 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	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

5 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Berwick,  
Northumberland, TD15 2EX

Thank you for making my inspection of your school so enjoyable. I enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classrooms, looking at your books and displays and talking to you about your school. You were friendly and polite and I was impressed by your outstanding behaviour. These are the things I found out about your school during my visit.

You attend a good school. All the people who work in school are doing a good job. Most aspects, such as your personal development, are good. You understand the importance of staying healthy and you feel safe. Your attendance is satisfactory. You told me you enjoy school. I was impressed at how you make new friends. The outdoor mural showing how you learned about each other's backgrounds is a really good example of you, your families and the staff working together. Your school is indeed a happy, friendly place to be!

The staff provide you with good care. Those who need extra help get good support. You receive good guidance on how to improve your work and clear targets to work towards. The curriculum is mostly good so learning is interesting. Good teaching ensures you make good progress throughout the school. You can play your part by working hard in lessons. Most of you have reached average standards by Year 2 and above average standards in most subjects by Year 4. Well done!

I have left some suggestions about things the school could do better. These are to:

- provide more opportunities for pupils who need help with technical writing skills
- ensure the mathematics programme includes sufficient time for investigations.

I wish you and all the staff the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Derek Sleightholme

Lead inspector