

# St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sacriston

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114243
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	338321
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Petts

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>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	83
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Mary Maplesden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Louise Keenan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Front Street Sacriston Durham DH7 6AB
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 371 0272
<b>Fax number</b>	-
<b>Email address</b>	st.bedes.rc.sacriston@durhamlearning.net

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## **Introduction**

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and analysed 53 questionnaire responses from parents. The team also looked at the pupils' progress data, governor's minutes, the school improvement plan, school policies and procedures, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to the School Improvement Partner to discuss her reports.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in view of the limitations of direct access to outdoor provision
- the impact of school action to improve the writing skill of all pupils
- the effectiveness of senior leaders in tackling any underachievement, for example of the more able boys, to ensure that all pupils are achieving consistently in all subjects.

## **Information about the school**

St Bede's is a small school serving the former mining community of Sacriston to the north west of Durham City. Most pupils come from the immediate locality but a few travel from further afield. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background with a very small number who speak English as an additional language. The number eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to twice the national average and this varies from year group to year group. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a small group of Reception age children who are taught in a mixed-age class with Years 1 and 2. The school has the full International, Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It has many outstanding features. Pupils are happy, energetic and considerate young people who learn and play exceptionally well together. A great deal of their personal development is outstanding because the school provides excellent care and gives each pupil excellent support and guidance. Their behaviour is exemplary and their attendance good. At the heart of the senior leader's determined push for improvement is the promotion of equality of opportunity. This is the reason why pupils who face challenging circumstances or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good or occasionally better progress as their learning and support is carefully tailored to meet the needs of individuals.

Children arrive in school with below average skills and make good progress throughout the school. Recent class reorganisation in Year 1 to Year 6 has made mixed-age learning more effective and increased challenge in Years 5 and 6. This, together with positive action to boost their writing and thinking skills, has accelerated the rate of pupil progress, especially for the more able pupils. The quality of teaching is good with some excellent practice. By the end of Year 6, pupils' achieve consistently above average attainment in reading, mathematics and science, with writing not far behind. Pupils' thinking and reasoning skills when analysing problems and exploring possible solutions are particular strengths. Children make good progress in Reception to achieve skills that are broadly typical for their age. Observations and assessments of their learning are thorough and systematic although sometimes opportunities are missed to involve parents in their children's 'learning journey' and contribute to the continuous improvement of early learning. Excellent opportunities are provided for the pupils to find out about their local community and the beliefs and cultures that exist around the world, but their first-hand experiences of the diverse cultures and beliefs in the wider community are limited.

School leaders display much forward thinking and ambition for the school. A committed staff ably supports them. Governors are very active and questioning. Areas of relative weakness have been tackled highly successfully. Self-evaluation is accurate and precisely identifies strengths and areas for improvement. The school has excellent partnerships with other educational providers and community services. This greatly enhances what the school provides, helps to boost achievement and contributes to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. The school has a good capacity to sustain improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Extend the links with parents of Early Years Foundation Stage children by:
  - giving them the opportunity to extend learning in the home and contribute to their children's 'learning journey'
  - providing parents with more opportunities to contribute to the school's continuous improvement of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Extend the range of experiences beyond school in order to extend pupils' understanding of different cultures and beliefs in the national context.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Pupils make good progress, including those with English as an additional language. They are eager, work hard and enjoy their learning. Although cohorts do vary, there is a clear pattern of above average attainment over time by the end of Year 6. Increasingly, older pupils are taking charge of their own learning, checking their progress and deciding when it is time to move on to a more challenging activity. Active learning is a feature of all lessons coupled with a firm focus on independent thinking. Pupils naturally map out solutions when successfully analysing and solving problems. The school's above average results bear this out. The introduction of the 'Big Writing' initiative has raised writing attainment to similar levels to reading, mathematics and science, successfully addressing a relative weakness. Imaginative curriculum themes and activities provide the stimulus for much creative and interesting writing. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those facing challenging circumstances make good and occasionally better progress because intervention and support is well targeted and effective. Higher ability pupils achieve well because tasks are carefully matched to their individual abilities and talents. Evidence from lessons and work scrutiny confirms that attainment in all subjects is rising and a large majority are on course to exceed their challenging targets, especially in Year 6. In learning where the pace of progress is not quite so rapid staff skills are being successfully nurtured to provide even higher levels of challenge.

Pupils are responsible and safety conscious. They have an excellent grasp of the benefits of eating healthily and keeping fit. They are active and energetic at playtimes. The excellent staff role models ensure that pupils are emotionally mature and helpful towards each other, for example older pupils taking responsibility in the corridors. Their good attendance reflects their high level of enjoyment of school life. Pupils have a dynamic voice in school improvement and take pride in their contributions, for example taking responsibility for playground friendship initiatives. They also manage fund-raising for a local hospice. They respect each other's views and differences and find out about cultures and beliefs across the world, although their direct experience of those found across the country is narrower. Pupils report that they feel safe, that bullying is very rare and there is no racism. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and evident in the quality of the relationships with one another and staff. They raise money for good causes, raising money for a bicycle for children in Africa. Their understanding of their own faith boosts pupils' strong values. All this adds up to a happy school community with a strong sense of belonging.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good with examples of inspiring practice from a hard-working team. The best practice is characterised by carefully matched tasks to meet individual needs and talents, excellent relationships and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Consequently, pupils are confident thinking analytically and reflecting on a range of answers and solutions. They can then explain their choices clearly. In lessons, staff provide logical explanations enhanced by skilled use of whiteboard technology. Teachers mark pupils' work systematically providing much encouragement. They provide probing commentaries which challenge pupils' thinking about their next steps in their learning. Assessment information is skilfully used to pinpoint individual weaknesses and target intervention and support. When progress slows a little, it is because opportunities are occasionally missed to challenge knowledge and understanding even more.

The outstanding curriculum links subjects together really well to make learning more interesting and offer opportunities to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Provision for personal development is excellent, for example, the Community Support Police Officer using dogs 'Jet' and 'Ben' to teach pupils

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

to watch out for strangers. Specialist teaching enables pupils to learn to speak French, with school staff mentoring of Durham University students enhancing this provision. Outstanding international links have been forged with schools in Africa, which adds to pupils' understanding of the plight of Third World countries often desperate for food and water aid. There are a rich variety of after school clubs, including sport partnerships, to add to pupils' experiences, skills and fitness.

The school provides excellent care and support for pupils and families. It excels in its provision for those who face challenging circumstances or who are potentially vulnerable. Staff display an intimate knowledge of each child and enjoy very harmonious relationships with nearly all parents. Excellent links with the playgroup ensure children settle quickly and thrive on arrival, and preparation for transfer to secondary school is first-rate.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders are highly committed to making all learning effective. All staff share their aspirations. Governors are clearly committed to sustaining improvement. Robust review of performance has sharpened assessment practice and improved the quality and consistency in the teaching of writing. Good development planning identifies appropriate actions to sustain improvements. Despite the shortcomings of a largely Victorian building and a confined site, the school provides a range of vibrant classrooms in which children can thrive. Systems to check what pupils have understood are rigorous and effective. The effective management of the school's progress information ensures that analysis is accurate and reliable. Consequently, all intervention and support is accurately targeted. They systematically check and question how well the school is doing. The school adopts recommended procedures to safeguard its pupils. These meet the current government requirements, particularly in relation to child protection. Issues of safety are effectively integrated into pupils' learning; for example, all older pupils attend the annual safety carousel run by the emergency services. The school is a very friendly, happy community free from prejudice. Consequently, all pupils regardless of background or starting point progress and enjoy their learning equally well.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

On entry to Reception, children's skills are below those expected for their age. A key strength is the happy, friendly atmosphere that ensures children settle confidently alongside older pupils. Well-planned activities provide plenty of opportunities for children to explore, think for themselves and work out problems. Children make excellent progress developing their personal skills as they become familiar with routines and get to know their classmates and older friends. Despite the absence of direct outside access, they are encouraged to instigate their own learning with staff triggering further learning with incisive questions. Outside they are able to explore and investigate in a stimulating area alongside the parish allotment. In all learning, there is a strong focus on open-ended questions to help children explain their thinking and express their imagination. Joint sessions with the playgroup add to the children's development of social and emotional skills really well in gym-based activity, for example lying on the floor, working together to move and shape a large colourful parachute. All children make good progress to reach the levels expected of them with many exceeding in the development of their personal skills. Children understand the importance of good hygiene habits, 'To wash away the germs.' before and after making Christmas sweets. The provision is well led and managed. Assessment is thorough and accurate with notes and photographs compiled in a 'learning journey'. However, opportunities are not always taken to include parents' observations of learning and play in the home and contribute to further improvement of provision.



*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

In response to the questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents were extremely positive about their children's enjoyment, progress and safety when in school. Parents clearly value the high quality care, consideration and personal guidance given to their children. Nevertheless, a small minority of parents expressed concerns that the school did not take enough account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspectors did recognise that recent changes in school routines approved by governors did cause some disquiet. However, the inspectors found that the governing body had acted properly. A small minority also expressed concerns about the management of unacceptable behaviour. The inspectors appreciate that a few individual children can be lively and robust in their play but judged that the management of behaviour is very effective. Thoughtful and sensible behaviour in calm, orderly settings is normal throughout the day.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sacriston to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	55	21	40	2	4	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	27	51	18	34	8	15	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	34	24	45	6	11	4	8
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	40	27	51	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	47	21	40	3	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	38	22	42	10	19	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	45	27	51	2	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	43	25	47	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	36	27	51	5	9	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	40	15	28	8	15	9	17
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	30	18	34	9	17	9	17
The school is led and managed effectively	18	34	22	42	6	11	6	11
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	47	17	32	9	17	2	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## **Common terminology used by inspectors**

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



10 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sacriston, Durham DH7 6AB

Thank you for being so very friendly, thoughtful and helpful when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our time at St Bede's, particularly the conversations we had with you. I would like to tell you about some of the positive things about your school.

- The school staff look after you and care for you exceptionally well and help you all to make good progress in your learning, especially improving your writing.
- Your behaviour and enjoyment of school life are impressive and this is reflected in your good attendance.
- You know how to stay safe, stay healthy and keep fit.
- There are excellent partnerships with other schools, the village and support agencies and the school enjoys good relationships with your parents.
- You have a good headteacher and a hardworking and talented team of staff.

Your school provides a good education that has many strengths. By the time you leave school, the standards you reach are above the average expected for your age. To help your school get even better and make sure you gain even more first-hand learning experiences outside of school, we have asked for some improvements to be made.

These will make sure that:

- you are given more direct opportunities to think about the different lives and beliefs of other people in Britain
- your parents are able to add to your 'learning journey' in the Early Years Foundation Stage with observations of your learning and play at home and suggest any further improvements to your early learning.

You can play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection. We hope the school will keep on building on its many strengths.

Best of luck to you all

Clive Petts

Lead inspector

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