

St Bede's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114284
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	338330
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	David Scott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Fairbank
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 part-lessons, observed all 10 class teachers and had meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans, school policies and analysed 111 parental, 102 pupil and 14 staff questionnaires. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

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

- the impact of the quality of learning in lessons on pupils' attainment
- how well the school is using assessment data to secure improvement for all groups of pupils
- the provision for more-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of leaders and managers, at all levels, on driving improvements across all key stages.

Information about the school

St Bede's is an average-size school. Nine out of ten pupils are of White British heritage, the remainder being from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, the largest group being those with moderate learning needs. Since the last inspection, the school has gained the Healthy Schools status and the Eco Schools Award.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Bede's is a good school. It has improved under the very positive leadership of the headteacher. Her staff and a sound governing body support her enthusiastically. The school has excellent links with the local community, particularly with a special school, its partner primary and secondary schools and sports and music service providers. The school instils in its pupils a clear sense of values, self-belief and above all, a joy of learning. As one pupil said, 'I really enjoy St Bede's. I wish I could sleep here!'

The school's motto 'being the best we can be' is seen in all its work and helps pupils to gain outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well in their learning because of the school's very high expectations. Staff work hard to eradicate any differences in the achievement of groups of pupils.

Information on pupils' progress is accurately captured and tracked. Analysis by staff is not yet robust enough to ensure that all pupils make accelerated progress.

St Bede's has been successful in driving up pupils' academic performance and sustaining effective practice in supporting their personal development. Pupils feel safe and secure and have a very mature and well-developed understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, with the school being recognised for its work in this area by receiving a national award. The partnership with parents and carers and other agencies is good and underpins and supports the school's exceptionally good care, guidance and support. As one parent commented, echoing the views of many, 'this school has a lovely family atmosphere and the children at St Bede's are happy, well behaved and well mannered.'

Leaders have brought about many improvements through honest and accurate school self-evaluation. Concerted action, by all staff, has improved pupils' attainment, particularly in mathematics and developed teachers' skills. Consequently, teaching and learning are good, with some being outstanding. This has led to a rising trend in attainment over the last three years. As a result, the school has a good capacity to improve and fulfil its ambitious vision for the future. Leaders also know that there are examples of good assessment practice, although the quality across the school is variable. Teachers' skills in asking probing questions are not sufficiently well developed to provide specific targets that enable all pupils to make consistently good or better progress. Behaviour is good, with pupils responding positively to the high expectations set. Since the last inspection, the school has accelerated the progress of more-able pupils and has increased its expertise and confidence in using data.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make, so that they are

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consistently good or better, by:

- ensuring teachers use day-to-day assessments to provide activities that are challenging and are carefully matched to the varied needs of all pupils
- asking more effective probing questions in lessons which give pupils opportunities to develop and explain their ideas fully
- reviewing targets more systematically with pupils so they clearly understand how to improve.
- Improve the impact of leaders and managers at all levels on school
- improvement, by:
 - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information is analysed robustly by setting quantifiable measures against which to evaluate success
 - extending the capacity of leaders and governors still further to manage their areas of responsibility through coaching and training.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' learning and progress in lessons are good. They behave well, and mature into polite, thoughtful and considerate young people. The overwhelming majority of pupils are enthusiastic about their tasks and respond appropriately to teachers' requests. In Year 3, for example, a group of pupils thoroughly enjoyed a quick-fire game on the interactive white board to revise their work on coordinates. Then they looked at different ways of exploring coordinates and compass points where they made good progress by discussing with their 'learning partners' how these were used by local famous explorers. In a good numeracy lesson in Year 1, pupils responded well where they first estimated and measured items in centimetres and then recorded their results in colour to further develop their enquiry and problem-solving skills.

Attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. In 2009, more-able pupils performed well, particularly so in science and mathematics. Girls outperformed boys in all areas. Despite this success, leaders are anything but complacent, being ever vigilant to continue to help boys improve their writing skills. Overall, pupils make good progress and their achievement is good. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do as well as their peers because of the exceptional care and support they receive.

Pupils get on extremely well together and willingly take on responsibilities around the school. They are proud to be school council members, as they were elected following 'real-life' election procedures. Pupils are aware of the world of work and are well prepared for their futures. The school has worked hard with both pupils and parents and carers to emphasise the importance of good attendance. As a result, pupils' attendance is above average. Through the work associated with the national awards they have a mature understanding of current conservation issues, by first-hand experience of growing flowers and vegetables, as well as of recycling.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Classrooms are delightful, both indoors and out, with imaginative displays to capture and respond to pupils' interests and enthusiasms. The 'environmental' gardens and pond provide a 'breathing place' for pupils' quiet reflection and the study of various eco systems. As a result of these approaches and effective monitoring, teaching is good overall, with some lessons outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and subject knowledge is strong, so that explanations are well structured and confident. New technology is increasingly well used to make lessons interesting. Within this positive picture, occasionally teachers' explanations are too long, which reduces the opportunity for pupils to explain their ideas, and target setting does not always identify clearly how pupils can improve their work.

The recently introduced enquiry-based curriculum meets the needs and interests of all learners well. It is further enriched by visiting theatre productions, guest speakers, international dance and music extravaganzas and clubs ranging from rock climbing to playing in the Ukulele Orchestra. A wide range of trips and visits, including the annual residential for Year 6, provide excellent opportunities for pupils to broaden their

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

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personal and academic skills.

The school is rightly proud of its highly effective care, guidance and support. The most vulnerable pupils benefit greatly from the excellent work the school carries out with external agencies. Staff can point to real successes in helping pupils overcome difficult histories and challenging episodes in their lives to enjoy learning again and make good progress. 'The school has helped me to work by myself and made me more confident,' commented one pupil. The inclusion team provides a wide range of support to enable vulnerable pupils to play a full part in school life and is increasingly successful at engaging hard-to-reach families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The determination, vision and commitment of the headteacher have created a welcoming and harmonious ethos which permeates throughout the school. As a result of this high degree of care and trust, staff support each other well. Staffing has been reorganised, weaker teaching has been tackled well and there is a clear ambition to make sure that all lessons are good and that pupils achieve well. Consequently, teaching is improving and progress and learning are accelerating. However, a number of leaders are newly appointed to the school or are new to their responsibilities, and although 'green shoots' are beginning to emerge, for many it is still too early to assess their full impact. The school recognises that further training and coaching is required to help all staff become more effective in raising standards.

The headteacher and her deputy headteacher complement each other well, and work together to guide and support staff. They know the strengths of the school well and their vision to improve achievement for all pupils has created confidence and a real sense of purpose throughout the school and among parents and carers.

The school ensures that every pupil has an equal chance to learn. They rigorously tackle any discrimination. Senior and middle leaders guide staff so that equality of opportunity and inclusion are excellent. Governors are supportive and fulfil their statutory duties. The challenge they provide has had an impact on some areas of the school's work, for example, in the areas of personnel and financial management. While they receive drafts of the school's self-evaluation documents, they are not sufficiently involved in evaluating the school's performance. The school has comprehensive and robust procedures for staff vetting, safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet all government guidelines well.

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Community cohesion is good because leaders have an effective understanding of their own community and the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures that exist within it. The school's international links promote good awareness of global issues, for example, through a variety of fund-raising projects, which have included purchasing exercise books, and building a new kitchen for a school in Tanzania.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They settle in quickly and are keen to learn. Children play together and are very well behaved. They enjoy learning in this busy environment. When they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's attainment is typically that expected for their age. By the end of Reception, they attain levels that are above those expected for their age, with the exception of writing, which is in line. They make most gains in their language development, personal skills and their ability to recognise number. For example, this was demonstrated when the children asked their puppet 'Maisie' to help them count the seeds they were planting and summoned up apt vocabulary about the soil and the way it felt.

Children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities, indoors and out, carefully chosen to meet their needs and interests. They are given the opportunity to select their own learning activities and respond well to encouragement and praise to explore and widen their choices. Teaching is consistently outstanding, with motivating lessons moving at a good pace in a friendly and safe atmosphere.

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Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Exceptionally high levels of care and welfare are provided for the children to ensure their well-being. The school's support for vulnerable children is of the highest standard. Partnerships with parents and external agencies are strong so that specialist help is sought and provided when needed. Teachers and helpers are highly perceptive and note down significant moments of each child's progress, and make good use of the 'daily diary' and 'learning journeys' to communicate with parents and carers. These records are used astutely to ensure that each child's learning is moved speedily forward, with no stress and only joy. Smiles and gentleness abound in this place but great rigour too.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The school enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires. Almost all respondents were very positive about the school and felt that it keeps pupils safe and helps them maintain a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bede's RC Primary School 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 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 238 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	73	29	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	97	87	14	13	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	64	58	46	41	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	59	42	38	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	71	64	40	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	62	42	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	68	61	42	38	1	1	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)	62	56	48	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	60	54	48	43	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	53	48	43	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	44	59	53	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	62	56	46	41	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	70	33	30	0	0	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



25 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bede's RC Primary School, Darlington DL1 3ES

This letter is to thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school and for taking the time from your breaks to talk to the inspectors. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work and play. Many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they were with the school; as one parent said, 'My son has received the best possible start to his school life at St Bede's.' Another commented, 'The headteacher is highly supportive and approachable and I feel privileged that my child attends this school.' Inspectors agree with these views.

We came to find out as much as we could about your school and now I would like to tell you what I said in the report I have written. You go to a good school. Your headteacher and teachers make your school a very special and welcoming place. You and your parents told us that you like school and that it is a very caring and happy place where you feel really safe. You are respectful, polite and considerate towards each other. We especially enjoyed your enthusiastic and tuneful singing, especially as it was in three parts! We were also delighted to learn how the younger children care for Cynthia the snail and Barry and Paul, the guinea pigs!

Your headteacher and teachers are determined to help you succeed, as are your parents and carers. I recognise that the school will have to work hard to keep up such high standards. Staff and governors know what they want to improve. I have asked that they:

- make your lessons even more interesting by planning work that will challenge and engage you, by asking more searching questions
- give you clearer advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve your very best
- look at the information about your performance more carefully, so that they can help you to progress even faster
- extend what leaders and governors do through coaching and training.

It was very good to meet you all. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott

Lead inspector

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