

St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122308
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340122
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Gillian Salter-Smith

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Denton
Headteacher	Mr M White
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed. Six teachers and one higher-level teaching assistant were seen teaching. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and pupils. Inspectors talked to parents and carers informally as they arrived at school with their children. Inspectors observed the school's work and analysed pupils' written work. Documents looked at included the school's self-evaluation form, the 2009/10 improvement plan, assessment information, policies and documents relating to safeguarding. Questionnaires were received and analysed from 40 parents and carers in addition to a number from staff and pupils.

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

- the achievement of pupils overall, especially in writing for the more-able pupils and boys
- the consistency and effectiveness of teaching and use of assessment to support learning in the light of recent staffing difficulties
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in bringing about improvement rapidly enough given recent instability in staffing and leadership
- the accuracy of the school's view that Early Years Foundation Stage provision and outcomes are good.

Information about the school

The number of pupils on roll is average for a school of this type. An average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of the few pupils from minority ethnic groups, a very small number speak English as an additional language. A small proportion of pupils are from White Romany/Gypsy or Traveller backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. However, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools and the Active Sports Awards.

An acting headteacher, who is the substantive deputy headteacher, has been in post since April 2010 during the long-term absence of the substantive headteacher. The local authority has very recently appointed an experienced headteacher to provide support as a mentor for three days per week. The school is in the process of reorganisation and will become a primary school from September 2010. Building work, in preparation for the reorganisation, is nearing completion.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage children make good progress because the provision meets their needs well. However, in the rest of the school, pupils' achievement, learning and progress are inconsistent and inadequate overall. Attainment has not risen significantly since the last inspection and, although average overall, it has dipped to below average in writing in Key Stages 1 and 2.

Pupils' progress in writing is inadequate in Key Stages 1 and 2, especially for boys and the more-able pupils. Disruptions to staffing have contributed to inadequate progress in some year groups. The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate in Key Stages 1 and 2 because expectations are too low, particularly in writing. Assessment is not used precisely enough to ensure that all pupils are fully challenged. There is not enough good teaching to accelerate progress. The curriculum does not meet the needs and interests of all pupils.

Self-evaluation does not reflect accurately the quality of provision and its impact on pupils' outcomes. Leaders and managers have not secured sufficient improvement since the previous inspection and steps taken to improve teaching are not yet having an impact. The governing body has not held the school to account well enough for the achievement of pupils and the quality of provision. Acting leaders recognise what needs to be done and have made a determined start on tackling weaknesses. Some action taken is beginning to have a positive impact, for example on improving behaviour, and work on improving the teaching of mathematics has been effective. However, many systems, such as those for monitoring progress and provision, are very new and are not yet having a discernible impact on accelerating pupils' progress and improving the quality of provision, particularly in writing.

The pastoral system provides satisfactory care for pupils; those who are identified as being more vulnerable are supported well. A good start has been made to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and they make satisfactory progress. The governing body is not ensuring that statutory requirements for promoting community cohesion are fulfilled. Little progress has been made in the areas identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection and the school is unable to demonstrate the necessary capacity to secure sustainable improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, attainment and progress in writing, especially for boys and the more-able pupils by:
 - - making lessons more interesting and exciting in order to engage pupils fully and help develop writing skills
 - - providing more opportunities for pupils to talk about what they are going to write about before they tackle a writing task
 - - ensuring that there is a clear focus on improving writing skills, whenever pupils are writing in other subjects across the curriculum
- Improve the quality of the teaching and the use of assessment so that there is greater proportion of good or better learning in lessons by:
 - - raising the expectations of learning and progress in lessons
 - - using assessment information more precisely to inform planning and provide challenge for the more-able pupils
 - - increasing the pace of learning and the active involvement of pupils in learning activities
 - - improving marking and the use of targets to help pupils become more aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
 - - improving the management of pupils' behaviour to promote a positive climate for learning
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including the governing body by:
 - - securing stability in the long-term leadership of the school
 - - ensuring that recently introduced systems to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of provision are checked rigorously for their impact on pupils' achievement
 - - ensuring greater rigour in the way teachers are held accountable for pupils' progress
 - - creating a curriculum that motivates and engages pupils more fully and that more closely meets the needs of all pupils
 - - developing and implementing policy and plans for promoting community cohesion that fully take into account the school's context and evaluates its impact on pupils' outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Many pupils enjoy learning when tasks are interesting and they are actively involved, for example when they use laptops to work on practical problems in mathematics. When the opportunity arises, pupils are usually keen to answer questions and to talk to each other about their work. However, in too many lessons pupils start to lose interest and become distracted when the teacher talks for too long or when they are not actively involved in learning. In some lessons pupils are not eager to start their writing tasks and lack confidence. Work in pupils' books, particularly in writing, is too often unfinished. Little work is of high quality and there is a great deal of misspelling and weak

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punctuation. Many pupils do not take enough care in the presentation of their work. By Year 6, attainment in mathematics and reading is broadly average and learning and progress are satisfactory. Progress overall is inadequate in some year groups because of inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching. Progress in writing is inadequate across the school and attainment has fallen. Pupils from White Romany/Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds achieve satisfactorily because they receive effective support, including when they are away from the school.

Behaviour in lessons varies in response to the quality of the teaching. Occasionally, learning is disrupted and the pace of learning slows. Behaviour at playtimes is satisfactory. Most pupils feel safe in school. Some take on responsibilities sensibly, such as acting as 'buddies' to their peers and younger pupils. Pupils are involved in raising money for many charities. The attendance of most pupils is broadly average. Pupils' enjoyment of enterprise activities and opportunities for pupils to work in pairs develop skills that prepare them satisfactorily for the future. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of people from cultures, religions and backgrounds different from their own.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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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How effective is the provision?

Teachers know the personal needs of pupils well and relationships are positive and supportive. Teaching assistants are working effectively with small groups of pupils helping them to catch up in their work when they have fallen behind. Other than in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is not enough good teaching to accelerate progress, particularly in writing. Too many lessons are dull and do not get pupils excited and interested in learning. The pace is slow and too much time is spent listening to the teacher talk. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to talk about what they are going to write about before they tackle a writing task. Sometimes they do not understand enough about what they are asked to write about. Systems to assess pupils' progress have improved and are beginning to be used to set pupils more challenging targets. However, these targets are not yet used consistently across the school to ensure that pupils are challenged and know what they need to do to improve. Planning does not take enough account of pupils' prior learning and tasks are not matched adequately to pupils' different abilities. The quality of marking of written work is inconsistent and not always helpful to pupils.

The curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils, particularly boys and the more-able pupils. It makes insufficient contribution to their enjoyment and progress, especially in writing. A start has been made in developing more interesting themes and topics, and ensuring that information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed. However, there is no coherent plan to assure the improvement in writing, particularly when pupils are writing in subjects across the curriculum. Useful work in partnership with local providers is developing pupils' opportunities for enterprise.

Christian values underpin the work of the school and provide a supportive environment. The school works effectively with local agencies to provide support for pupils from Traveller and White Romany/Gypsy families and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Not all pupils who are learning English as an additional language receive the support they need.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has undergone a turbulent year with disruptions to staffing and leadership, imminent reorganisation and a large building programme. These have served to slow

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down the drive for improvement. Improvement planning sets out appropriate priorities for the current year, such as improving attainment in writing, but the rate of progress in achieving the plan's objectives has been slow. There is no coherent plan for further improvement. This is because recently implemented monitoring of provision and pupils' progress is not yet providing leaders with a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses to inform planning. The use of target setting to raise expectations is very new and has not had sufficient time to improve pupils' progress or hold teachers fully to account for the progress of pupils.

The governing body has a number of new personnel who bring a wider range of expertise. Members of the governing body are supportive of the school but are not fully involved in monitoring its work and have not been effective enough in posing challenging questions of leaders and managers, particularly in relation to pupils' progress and the quality of provision.

Equality of opportunity is inadequate because the gaps between girls' and boys' achievement in writing are not closing and the more-able pupils are not achieving well enough; some year groups are not making sufficient progress.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are satisfactory and meet current statutory requirements. Staff and governors are trained appropriately in safe recruitment and child protection procedures. Leaders and the governing body have ensured that pupils are kept safe during the building programme.

There has been no formal analysis of the school's context with regard to community cohesion and no policy or plans take this analysis into account. There is no means of evaluating the impact of any work relating to community cohesion. However, the school is a cohesive community and pupils have some experience of people from cultures, religions and backgrounds different from their own through activities promoted within the curriculum.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle into the Nursery quickly because of the good arrangements for staff to meet with parents and carers. This ensures that children are happy and well prepared for their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. Learning in all areas of the curriculum is well planned both indoors and outdoors. There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those initiated by children. Most activities have a clear purpose but some lack a clear focus on what should be learned. Opportunities to assess children are integrated carefully into the day and the information is used well to plan future learning. Staff have good relationships with children and have high expectations of them. Staff guide conversations with children, skilfully building children's confidence in speaking. Leaders and managers have a clear picture of priorities for improvement and they take well-planned action, ensuring that all staff are involved in making improvements. Leaders take good care to ensure that children are safe. By the time children leave Reception, most reach the levels of development expected for their age and have made good progress in relation to their starting points.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

The response from parents and carers was low. Parents and carers expressed concern about the quality of teaching, the adequacy of the progress made by their children, the management of the behaviour of pupils and the effectiveness of leaders and managers. Inspectors endorsed parents and carers concerns in these areas. Inspectors recognise that recent improvements are being put in place but have not yet had an impact on outcomes for pupils. A few parents and carers expressed concerns that bullying was not dealt with effectively. Inspectors looked carefully into the school's systems for dealing with bullying and harassment and talked to pupils about how safe and cared for they felt. They found that systems for dealing with bullying and harassment are in place and effective for most pupils and their families.

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 First 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	51	20	44	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	64	13	29	2	4	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	53	15	33	6	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	49	13	29	8	18	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	27	60	9	20	8	18	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	44	17	38	8	18	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	51	20	44	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)	27	60	14	31	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	56	13	29	4	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	38	13	29	11	24	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	40	18	40	5	11	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	18	40	17	38	7	16	3	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	64	9	20	7	16	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Bedlington, NE22 6EQ

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspection team. We found that many of you enjoy school, are polite and friendly and that you raise funds for many different charities. You take the responsibilities that you are given seriously and most of you have satisfactory attendance. Although you achieve satisfactorily in mathematics and reading, many of you are not achieving as well as you should in writing. The work in your lessons and in your books shows that attainment in writing is lower than it should be. Some of the teaching in your school helps you to make progress; however, much of it needs to be improved. To help you improve more rapidly, the inspection team has placed the school in a category known as 'special measures'. This means that inspectors will visit your school again to check how quickly the school is improving to help you to achieve your best.

To improve the school as quickly as possible, we have asked leaders and managers to focus on:

- raising your attainment in writing, especially for boys and for those of you who are more able
- improving teaching and learning, in writing especially, so that learning tasks are interesting and challenging and well matched to your needs
- ensuring that leaders and managers, including the governing body, bring about improvements in teaching and the curriculum more quickly.

You can all play your part by continuing to attend school regularly, tackling tasks in lessons enthusiastically and always trying hard to do your very best work.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead Inspector

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