

# St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Grindon Lane, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR4 8HP

**Inspection dates** 15–16 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher's ambitious vision and outstanding leadership have transformed the school since its previous inspection. She is wholeheartedly supported by highly skilled, dedicated staff and governors who share her ambitions for every child to be the best they can.
- Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They quickly follow routines and become confident learners who enjoy finding out things for themselves. By the end of Reception they have very good reading, writing and number skills.
- Pupils make excellent progress, regardless of their starting points, because they are eager to learn and work hard, and their teachers make sure they find success in every lesson. By the end of Year 6 pupils exceed the national average in English and mathematics; standards in reading are exceptionally high.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants work at a high level to meet the needs of every pupil. They constantly check on how well each pupil is learning so that they can set the right level of challenge for more improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They show consideration and respect for each other from the earliest age. They work hard in lessons because learning is so much fun. Pupils say they feel safe in school because people are kind. Excellent pastoral care from all staff creates a warm, safe environment where strong relationships and good learning flourish.
- The rich curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to find out about the world around them, follow their own interests and develop a strong sense of responsibility towards others. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons delivered by 10 teachers, one of which was a shared observation with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, staff, governors, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation of its work, the school's information about pupils' progress, and documentation relating to teachers' performance and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 143 responses from parents to the school's questionnaire, conducted in March 2013, because there were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to register their views. They also took account of 22 responses from staff.

## Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sue Smith	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children whose parents are in the armed services, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils, and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action, is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and no pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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

- Continue with plans to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, so that pupils' achievement rises even further.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children join the school in the Nursery with skills that are below those expected for their age. Regardless of their starting points, all children settle quickly and make outstanding progress by the end of Reception. They make excellent progress in the development of their language and communication, including early reading skills. By the end of the Reception class children are very well prepared for Year 1 with good literacy skills, a good knowledge of number and good levels of confidence and independence.
- From this strong base pupils make excellent progress as they move through the school. At the end of Year 6, in 2012, test results were above average in English and mathematics, confirming pupils' excellent progress from their starting points.
- Results in reading are consistently high because high-quality teaching in the Reception class gives children an excellent start with early reading skills. Pupils quickly progress to become fluent readers in Key Stage 1 because they are encouraged to read regularly and there is well-planned support for those children who need it. As a consequence, nearly all reach the level expected for their age by the end of Year 2.
- Provision for learning about letters and sounds (the basis of early reading skills) extends up to Year 6 for any pupil who needs it. This ensures that all pupils reach the expected level in reading before moving on to secondary school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are supported to achieve as well as other pupils by teachers' careful planning and good-quality support from teaching assistants. Their progress is closely monitored so that any signs of falling behind are quickly spotted and interventions put in place to help them catch up.
- Pupil premium funds are very well targeted to ensure that the achievement of pupils for whom the funds are intended at least matches that of other pupils in the school. In 2012 Year 6 pupils who were eligible for free school meals made slightly better progress than other pupils in the cohort and their attainment was at the same level as that of other pupils.
- Lesson observations during inspection, and examination of books in every class, support the school's tracking information that pupils are making better than expected progress throughout the school. Parents overwhelmingly agree their children make good progress.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The headteacher has led a sustained drive to improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers comment that they feel more skilled and have a better understanding of what constitutes high-quality teaching and learning than formerly. They have received high-quality training and support, and now routinely share their good practice.
- Pupils learn at a rapid pace because teachers have a very accurate knowledge of their needs. They use this skilfully to plan lessons that take account of pupils' different starting points in each subject. This ensures that pupils are able to succeed with tasks, which gives them confidence and spurs them on to make the best progress they can during lessons.
- High-quality marking is a hallmark of teachers' work throughout the school. Marking is frequent, tells pupils what they have done well and gives advice on what, and how, to improve. Teachers then give pupils time to make corrections and improve, so that they understand the importance of such tasks. The high quality of presentation in books reflects teachers' high expectations and pupils' clear understanding of these.
- Time is very well used in lessons because teachers provide a range of activities that allow pupils to work together. For example, Year 2 pupils made outstanding progress in a mathematics lesson solving number problems by working with friends. The teacher made excellent use of this time to check on how well all were learning and ironed out difficulties or challenged pupils to extend their thinking further. This accelerated progress so that problems were solved in double-

quick time.

- Small-group teaching is highly effective in boosting the learning of pupils who need additional support. Children in a Reception class made rapid and secure progress in their knowledge of simple three-letter words because of the individual attention the teaching assistant was able to provide for each one.
- Teachers make lessons exciting in a range of ways. Learning with and from friends is popular with all pupils, who say they enjoy learning this way and feel they do well. Sometimes teachers create a special atmosphere in the classroom to help pupils imagine story settings, as in a Year 4 English lesson where pupils wrote powerful descriptions in response to the 'creepy' atmosphere the teacher created with subdued lighting and 'eerie' music.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Pupils feel safe, are happy and care for each other very well because of the excellent example they are set by all staff.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning spring from the many exciting and interesting activities that teachers provide for them. They have been taught to keep going and support each other, so overcoming difficulties in their learning presents no problems. They are convinced they will succeed if they are determined enough.
- Pupils are confident that adults will look after them well and take their concerns seriously. Outstanding pastoral care gives first-rate support, especially to vulnerable pupils and their families. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they can talk about the different forms bullying can take. They have been well taught to keep themselves safe and know about risks connected with the internet.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to help the school improve. Older pupils acting as playground friends ensure no one is left out, while prefects and members of the school council have an increasing voice in where improvements are needed. Pupils also contribute to the life of the community, for example through the work of the school choir which delivers very-high-quality concerts in the community and, sometimes, at Durham Cathedral.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher's determined leadership has inspired staff to rapidly develop their skills, not only in teaching but also in leading improvements across a wide front. It is the total commitment of all staff which continues to accelerate significant improvements to teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour and achievement, and the school's overall effectiveness. Morale is high and, together, staff have demonstrated an outstanding capacity to further improve the school.
- Systems to track pupils' progress have been refined since the previous inspection, and training has given staff the skills to quickly spot any pupil who is at risk of underachievement. The effectiveness of these systems is seen in the very high proportion of pupils who reach at least the expected level and beyond by the end of Year 6, regardless of their starting points.
- Teachers' performance is well managed through straightforward, measurable targets linked to pupils' progress, other school priorities and salary progression. The provision of good training opportunities, together with strong teamwork for sharing good practice, is producing consistently high-quality teaching across the school.
- Pupils all have equal opportunities to succeed because of teachers' careful planning to meet individuals' needs. For example, pupils eligible for the pupil premium are very well supported with additional learning resources, small-group teaching and funding to allow them to join in all of the school's activities, including instrumental tuition.
- Productive links with partner schools have seen the curriculum develop rapidly. Teachers take a creative approach to linking topics so that pupils see connections between different subjects.

They provide frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their basic skills across their learning.

- The local authority provides light-touch support for the school.
- The vast majority of parents would recommend the school to other parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and are well aware, through their good understanding of the school's data on pupils' achievement, of how well the school is performing. They bring a wide range of expertise to the service of the school and are well placed to challenge, as well as support, its work. They ensure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Governors have approved the use of pupil premium funding to provide additional support. They are aware that this funding is used effectively to enable these pupils to achieve as well as others. Governors evaluate the school's appraisal system, understand the arrangements that link pay to the quality of teaching and pupils' performance, and challenge the headteacher to ensure that performance targets are met.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	108838
<b>Local authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	405198

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	246
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael McNulty
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Ward
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 June 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5536080
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