

# St Cuthbert's RC VA Primary School

Church Hill, Crook, County Durham DL15 9DN

<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 December 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Children's progress in the early years is not rapid enough, particularly in reading, writing and number.
- Rates of progress and levels of attainment for all groups of pupils are not consistently good, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- The quality of the teaching of phonics is inconsistent and at times staff pronounce the letter sounds incorrectly. Too many pupils do not achieve the expected levels in the Year 1 phonics check.
- The impact of pupil premium funding is not being tracked and measured clearly enough.
- Teaching has not been strong enough over time to promote consistently good progress for pupils.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and work set can lack challenge.
- Not all pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in a range of contexts.

### The school has the following strengths

- The relatively new headteacher brings ambition, enthusiasm and high expectations to the school.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders and staff work well as a team and are taking action to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement.
- The quality of pupils' writing in all areas of the school is improving rapidly.
- Pupils are proud of their school and participate enthusiastically in a wide range of clubs and activities. They behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are strong and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe at school, in the wider community and online. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that staff will address any problems that do arise.
- Governors know the school well. They make good use of information on the quality of teaching and information on pupils' achievement to hold the school to account.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that all pupils, and in particular those in Key Stage 1 and those supported by pupil premium funding, make progress which is at least good by:
  - setting more ambitious targets for what pupils can achieve, particularly in mathematics
  - sharing more widely the best practice currently in school so that all teaching is consistently good.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management **is good**

- Leadership and management are good because the recently appointed headteacher has secured marked improvements in middle leadership and in teaching. She has rapidly improved the quality of pupils' writing throughout the school.
- The headteacher and middle leaders make regular observations of teaching and learning. This enables leaders to identify more quickly than previously where improvements are needed and to provide focused support where required. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving. Systems have been developed to make sure that only those teachers who meet the ambitious targets that are set for them move up the salary scale.
- The highly effective curriculum, along with the school's clear values, combine to provide strong social, moral, spiritual and cultural development in all areas of the school. A rich and broad variety of activities and visits make learning exciting and enjoyable and are a true strength of the school.
- Discrimination of any type is not tolerated and pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths in modern Britain is very well developed. Pupils show compassion and tolerance for others and the work of the class and school councils is both highly effective and understood by all.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium money to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils but have yet to check closely enough on the impact this funding is making and so are not aware of which strategies are making the most or least difference.
- The school currently receives additional funding as part of the government's physical education and school sport initiative. The provision for sport in the school is good and effective use of the additional sport funding has further raised the profile of physical education across the school and improved both participation rates and the range of sporting opportunities on offer.
- Communication with parents is not yet strong and a minority of parents do not recognise recent improvements in the school. The headteacher has made significant efforts to engage with parents through a range of workshops designed to both involve parents and encourage them to support their children's work.
- The headteacher and school have not been well served by the local authority. Reports seen during the inspection gave an inaccurate and inflated view of what was happening in the school.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors bring strong expertise to their roles but in the past relied too heavily on information from the previous headteacher and so were not fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
  - Governors are now clearer as to what current achievement and the quality of teaching look like and what the school must do to improve. They now have the understanding and skills to hold senior and middle leaders to account effectively for their work and to ensure good use of money.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors, in conjunction with the senior leaders, ensure that all statutory requirements are in place.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Teaching over time has not enabled pupils to make the progress they should in reading, writing and in mathematics. There are examples of strong teaching in some curricular areas, including in religious education lessons, and in some classes, in particular in Key Stage 2, but there remains too much inconsistency across the school. Until recently leaders' checks on the quality of teaching lacked rigour and middle leaders had an over-generous view of teaching in some areas of the school.
- Senior leaders have made the development of teaching a priority, and improvements to teaching are having a positive impact on pupils by ensuring that they make up for weaker learning in the past. Teaching is now improving as a result of focused leadership, decisive performance management and effective support for staff. However, teaching is not yet consistently good across all year groups and subjects, and in some lessons teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve remain too low.
- The quality of marking and feedback has improved and pupils confidently tackle the areas for improvement identified by their teachers. Teachers regularly set homework that consolidates pupils' learning and supports communication between teachers and parents.
- The teaching of writing has improved considerably because of the sharp focus over the last year and this is reflected in the improved progress most pupils now make in writing throughout the school. They are

enthusied by the range of opportunities that they now have to write at length both in literacy lessons and in other areas of the planned curriculum.

- The teaching of reading has also improved following a significant investment in reading programmes, training and resources. Phonics is taught effectively in the early years, although in Key Stage 1 not all teachers consistently pronounce these sounds correctly.
- In mathematics, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high across the school and some teachers do not always ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in different contexts.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and experienced and often contribute well to pupils' learning. However, at times their impact is reduced because their skills are not used sufficiently well, especially in whole-class introductions or summaries. There are no clear systems for recording the impact of their work and using this information to inform next steps in pupils' learning.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning, to each other, and to adults are excellent. They are admirable ambassadors for the school and fully understand the meaning behind the school motto 'Live the light, share the light, be the light'. Pupils settle quickly to work and enjoy their lessons and learning. At playtimes they socialise well together.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They have an accurate understanding of what makes an unsafe situation and are able to talk knowledgeably about online safety and the potential dangers of using social media. They are taught about different forms of bullying and although they report that bullying is rare they know that if they witness or experience it staff would deal with it promptly.
- Pupils understand how to stay healthy and many of them are involved in the wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities which are on offer.
- The school supports pupils to develop into rounded citizens and ensures that all pupils are ready for secondary school when they leave Year 6. Pupils understand what it means to live in Britain and what helps make a tolerant and welcoming society.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They describe their lessons and extensive opportunities to take part in activities beyond the classroom with enthusiasm and want to do well.
- Observations of lessons confirm that there is only occasional inappropriate behaviour. Classrooms are orderly and contain high-quality displays of pupils' work. Pupils are very aware of the need to take turns and respect the views of others.
- Attendance for all groups of pupils is around the national average. The school is effective in monitoring attendance and leaders act promptly to address poor attendance through a range of effective strategies, including the operation of a breakfast club. This has led to a recent reduction in the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- A large proportion of the parents and staff who responded to the online questionnaires were positive about the high standards of behaviour in the school.

## **Outcomes for pupils** require improvement

- The achievement of pupils, and in particular disadvantaged pupils and those in Key Stage 1, requires improvement. Children join the school in Nursery or Reception classes with skills that are close to typical for their age. By the end of Year 6, standards in the 2014 national tests were broadly average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. Unvalidated results from the 2015 national tests, confirmed by lesson observations and a detailed scrutiny of pupils' books, indicate that the attainment of Year 6 pupils in reading and mathematics remains close to average but that attainment in writing has improved significantly and is now above average.
- Pupils' progress remains too variable in the early years and in Key Stage 1. By the time they enter Year 1,

a lower than average proportion of pupils meet the expected level of development for their age.

Inconsistencies in the ways in which staff teach phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) slows progress in reading and spelling and by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below the national average.

- Pupil progress improves in Key Stage 2, in particular in writing where inaccuracies are systematically addressed. There are now many more opportunities to write at length. Achievement is not as high in mathematics because there are fewer opportunities in other subjects for pupils to apply their mathematical skills. There remain inconsistencies in the rates of pupils' progress in different subjects, different classes and year groups, because the quality of teaching is not always consistently good or better.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 achieved levels in reading, writing and mathematics that were similar to other pupils in the school. This difference has increased and in comparison with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in 2015, the attainment of disadvantaged Year 6 pupils was around a year behind in writing and in mathematics and two terms behind in reading.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving because of strong leadership. Pupils' needs are identified accurately and they receive high-quality support both in lessons and in small groups.
- The achievement of able pupils is also improving and these pupils now reach attainment levels above those expected for their age.

### Early years provision

### requires improvement

- Over time, the proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of the early years is below the national average.
- Most children make steady progress across the early years. However, given their starting points, not enough children acquire the skills they need, particularly in reading, writing and number, to be well prepared for the increased demands of the Year 1 curriculum.
- Since the beginning of the academic year, the early years leader has taken action to improve the attainment and progress of children in the Nursery and Reception year groups. Inspectors saw strong progress in the acquisition of early writing skills in children's workbooks as a result of daily 'Robot Writing' sessions.
- Assertive action taken by the headteacher has led to an improvement in the rate at which children acquire knowledge and skills in phonics. Teachers and teaching assistants in the early years deliver new learning with skill and assurance.
- Teachers plan well for the attainment and progress of disabled children and those with special educational needs. This is a strength of the early years. However, leaders and teachers do not measure the impact of the additional funding for disadvantaged children with sufficient rigour. As a result, disadvantaged children do not make good enough progress in the early years and too few catch up with their classmates.
- Children are happy to attend the Nursery and Reception classes, settle quickly to their work and show sustained concentration over long periods of time. During the inspection, a child showed unrelenting concentration and determination to complete a collage of a goat to be used in a nativity performance. Her work had a purpose and she was proud to complete it.
- The partnership with parents is strong. Some parents actively contribute to their children's learning journals (the school's record of achievement in the early years). These contributions are extremely valuable and help teachers to plan work that closely matches children's skills and abilities. Parental contributions help children to make stronger progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114256
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002779

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<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>	231
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tanya Devereux
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rosaleen Donnelly
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 762889
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stcuthbertscrook.org.uk">www.stcuthbertscrook.org.uk</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 March 2012

## Information about this school

- This school caters for pupils aged from three to 11 years and is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2014.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is slightly above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- Few pupils leave or join the school other than at the beginning and end of the school year.
- A breakfast club is provided by the school.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set out the government's minimum standards for pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching across all classes in the school. They observed the quality of teaching and learning, looked at the current standard of pupils' work and talked to pupils about their learning and progress, and about their experiences of school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body and the local authority School Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's view of its own performance, monitoring records, information about pupils' progress, improvement planning, minutes of meetings of the governors, records of behaviour and attendance, and records relating to safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at other times during both days of the inspection about the quality of their educational experience and the standard of behaviour in the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

David Brown, lead inspector

Belita Scott

Judith James

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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