

St Cuthbert's Catholic Community School

Victoria Road, Botcherby, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 2UE

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils, parents, staff and external partners of the school identify significant and very positive changes to the school over the last year. These changes are already firmly built into the way the school works.
- The change of governance as the school joined the St Ninian's Federation has been very successful. Governors are dedicated, well informed and challenging to school leaders.
- The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher provide clear and determined leadership. They value staff and the contribution they make. The school is organised effectively.
- Subject leadership in the school is at an early stage of development.
- Staff morale is very high. Staff work hard.
- There is strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff take rapid action to help pupils if there are any concerns about their welfare.
- Pupils enjoy school. They say that they are happy and safe. This reflects the value staff place on pupils and their success. Pupils behave well and have good manners.
- There are consistent approaches to teaching. These have been developed through training and mutual support.
- Phonics teaching is effective. Pupils use their phonics skills well to help their reading.
- Pupils learn well and make good progress across the school, including in the early years.
- Pupils' attainment increased markedly over the last school year. However, it remains below the national average and even faster progress is needed for more pupils to reach greater depth in national curriculum assessments.
- Parents are happy with the education provided. Leaders seek ways to help parents to be involved in school life. There are effective arrangements to support communication with Polish-speaking parents.
- Attendance has risen and is around the national average. Leaders encourage and celebrate good attendance with pupils and take swift action if pupils' absences are unexplained.
- Children make a good start in the early years. They play together happily and behave well. The early years leader is enthusiastic and effective. However, the available outdoor space is small and makes learning there harder.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum has a good balance between English and mathematics, and other subjects. Extra activities, including the breakfast club and after-school clubs, broaden pupils' experience.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders and other staff build on the improving teaching to challenge pupils even more and increase rates of pupils' progress so that pupils' attainment is as high as possible.
- Ensure that leaders and early years staff seek ways to provide more suitable space for children to play and learn outdoors.
- Ensure that leaders and governors strengthen overall leadership further by implementing the planned development of subject leadership as part of the next phase of the school's improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The rapid improvement over the last school year demonstrates the highly effective leadership of the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, and the impact of the new federation arrangements for governance. Senior leaders ensure that the school is a caring and happy place where pupils learn well and make good progress. Leaders make sure that the challenges some pupils and their families face are not seen as an excuse for poor achievement but as a reason for raising aspiration even higher. Leaders' expectations of themselves, staff, pupils and parents are very high.
- Leaders know the school very well. Their evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is thorough. This leads to concerted action with clear priorities in a fast but step-by-step approach. For example, leaders and governors decided that it would be most useful for the uncompleted review of pupil premium spending, recommended in the previous inspection report, to be delayed a little longer. Leaders plan for this to take place early next term.
- While leadership of the school is enhanced by the adoption of tried and tested procedures established in the other federation school, leaders check that such procedures are also suitable for St Cuthbert's. Senior leaders ensure that there is close collaboration about subject leadership across the federation. However, specific roles and responsibilities for subject leaders have not yet been established at St Cuthbert's. This development is included in the current school improvement plan.
- Staff place a very high value on pupils and their learning. The school's positive culture is indicated by the number of times the inspector heard, 'I'm proud of you' said by staff to pupils during the inspection. Leaders recognise that many pupils are not from Roman Catholic families. However, they see one aspect of the school's faith commitment as meeting the needs of all. Staff model tolerance and respect for others and so build pupils' awareness of British values.
- Staff see themselves as part of a close team which aims to provide the best for pupils. Despite the recent changes, including to staffing itself, staff are determined to make this aim happen. Their very positive approach and team spirit have been nurtured by senior leaders. Leaders have taken clear decisions about staff deployment, for example to swap teachers between key stages at the start of this school year. This was to provide continuity for pupils and development opportunities for teachers. Leaders checked that this change was working and provided training and support to make sure that it was effective. Leaders have established a regular programme of training for staff. This includes sessions about curriculum development, teaching and safeguarding. The training has been one of the things that has led to the well-organised and consistent approaches to these aspects. In addition, staff openly and willingly share their expertise with each other. This extends across both schools in the federation.
- Leaders have successfully redesigned the curriculum. They have set out clear principles for this. The curriculum emphasises key knowledge that teachers have decided pupils would benefit from, in part to extend the limited experiences available to some pupils outside school. Leaders have made sure that due weight is given to subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. They use externally provided programmes to help

teachers bring subjects to life when they judge this will help teachers provide high-quality teaching and learning. For example, there are weekly science lessons, which include practical experiments. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy these. The inspector shared younger pupils' enjoyment in their singing as they practised for their Christmas play and in their phonics and mathematics learning. Pupils also extend their learning in after-school activities such as the keyboard and cross-country clubs.

- The parents I spoke with and those who completed Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire were highly complimentary about the school. They have confidence in staff and feel that their children learn well and are safe. They spoke about how behaviour has improved. Leaders have made a particular effort to help Polish-speaking families to be fully involved. Highly qualified Polish teaching assistants have been appointed. As well as their classroom responsibilities, these members of staff are available to translate written and spoken English where this is needed to help communication about school and family matters. Parents' enthusiasm about the school is also evident in the increasing number who volunteer to help, for example in hearing younger pupils read.

Governance of the school

- The school shares a single governing body with the other school in the St Ninian's Federation. This arrangement is highly successful. Governors are suitably experienced and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This, together with their determination and active contributions, supports the continuing improvement across the school.
- The review of governance recommended in the previous inspection report was not completed. The changes to governance and the positive impact of the new governing body mean that such a review is no longer needed.
- School leaders provide governors with suitably detailed information about pupils' progress and teachers' effectiveness. This means that the governors closely monitor the school's work. They ask searching questions of leaders to make sure that the school's work is as good as possible.
- Governors keep a close eye on the funding available to the school, including the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, and to support the development of sport and physical education. They consider the use of this additional funding carefully and make sure that it is spent properly. They know that the extra funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities allows such pupils to be successful and make similar progress to others.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, staff and governors are highly aware of their responsibility to look after pupils and to ensure that they are properly protected from risk. Staff receive regular training about safeguarding which gives them the confidence to know what to do should they become aware of a child at risk. Both the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher are trained to lead on safeguarding actions so that there is always a suitably trained person in school even when the executive headteacher is fulfilling his

responsibilities in the other federation school. In fact, the federation links mean that, as with other leadership matters, additional support is available should it ever be needed.

- Leaders' actions when any concerns arise are swift and persistent. Leaders ensure that the appropriate external agencies are involved and they check that concerns have been followed up and eventually resolved. They are prepared to spend whatever time is necessary, including after school and at weekends, to make sure that pupils are safe.
- Safeguarding records and documents are kept meticulously. The school's commitment to safeguarding and the detailed policy about child protection are made available for parents on the school website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is effective. Pupils learn successfully and enjoy the activities teachers provide. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve and provide work which challenges pupils. For example, in the detailed analysis of poetry undertaken by pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, in order to increase the attainment of pupils by helping them learn even faster, teaching needs to challenge pupils even more.
- The teaching of phonics is systematic and provides pupils with skills they use with confidence in their reading. As with other aspects of the curriculum, staff use consistent approaches to teaching phonics across the school. Pupils enjoy singing as part of this learning. This helps to keep pupils' interest and encourages them to try hard.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together closely to provide teaching which is well matched to pupils' starting points. This team approach is extended further by the inclusion of trainees and volunteers. These additional adults mean that pupils receive even more challenge and additional opportunities to practise their skills; for example, they have more opportunities to read to an adult in school.
- An experienced teacher of mathematics who is a specialist leader of education (SLE) provides continuing support to teachers in developing their teaching skills in mathematics. This includes leading some joint teaching sessions. Leaders and teachers identified that many pupils had gaps in their basic mathematical skills. Working with the SLE, teachers provide additional teaching for all pupils to fill these gaps. The rapid improvement in pupils' progress in mathematics indicates that mathematics teaching has rapidly improved.
- Teachers' consistent approaches to teaching literacy help pupils develop their writing. Teachers provide clear models for pupils in skills such as handwriting and presentation and, in a more fundamental way, through their positive relationships and high aspirations. They set clear standards for good behaviour and hard work, which pupils respond to very well.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are given learning activities as soon as they arrive at school each morning. This is one demonstration of teachers' determination to ensure that no learning time is lost during the school day.
- Teachers ensure that classrooms are attractive and welcoming which, in turn, supports pupils to learn well. Displays of pupils' work, for example celebrating the science

practical work done during the recent World Science Day, further encourage pupils to reflect on their success and enjoyment of learning.

- Leaders and teachers complete formal assessments of all pupils' achievement each term and use these to check that pupils make as much progress as expected. If any pupil is identified as at risk of falling behind, teachers offer additional teaching to speed up those pupils' learning. The achievement of such pupils is tracked even more closely.
- Leaders and teachers use their links within the federation and with other schools to check that their assessments are accurate. Teachers share their assessment of pupils' writing in a national programme as a further check. These processes and the close match between the school's predictions of pupils' marks in the national curriculum assessments and their final results show that the school's assessment systems are accurate.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff ensure that pupils' welfare is given the highest priority. This reflects the underlying principle of valuing each pupil throughout the school.
- Many of the pupils who talked with the inspector said that there was no bullying in the school. A very small number said that it occasionally happened, but all were very confident that any issues would be quickly sorted out by staff.
- The school's systems for rewarding good behaviour and nipping poor behaviour in the bud are clear and well understood by pupils. School records indicate very few incidents of significant poor behaviour. This positive aspect of the school's culture gives pupils the confidence to concentrate on learning.
- Leaders and other members of staff ensure that families can access the support they need so that pupils can be happy in school. The breakfast club is freely available to all pupils and means that parents and teachers can be confident that pupils have a healthy breakfast so that they are ready to learn.
- Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe in school and explained that this is because teachers look after them. In addition, pupils are taught about keeping safe, for example by leaders arranging for the police to explain to pupils how they can be safe when using the internet and about firework safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good in lessons, as they move around the school and during breaktimes.
- Pupils, staff, parents and professional partners working with the school consistently identify that pupils' behaviour has improved rapidly over the last year.
- The inspector saw no instances of poor behaviour during the inspection. Teachers build pupils' good behaviour and self-esteem through their use of praise.

- Pupils get along together well. They are friendly towards each other, whatever their family backgrounds, and open and welcoming to visitors. They are keen to talk about their work and how proud they are of their school.
- There has been rapid improvement in pupils' attendance, which is now around the national average. In part, this reflects pupils' desire to be in school. It has also been achieved by staff members' determined challenge to families about the impact of absence and their support and encouragement to ensure that pupils attend properly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils across the school make good progress. Many pupils have low starting points. For example, in 2016 and 2017 no Year 6 pupils were identified as having high prior attainment. This means that, despite the good progress pupils make, their overall attainment is below the national average. Leaders and teachers know that pupils need to make even faster progress than seen in many schools for pupils to finally reach average attainment. The school's systems to track pupils' progress set high expectations and check how many pupils make the accelerated progress needed to reduce the difference between pupils' overall attainment and the national average.
- The published information about pupils' achievement is subject to some uncertainty because the numbers in year groups are small. However, with the new leadership and stronger teaching, there are clear indications of improvement. For example, Year 6 pupils' progress in mathematics rose from being well-below average in 2016 to broadly average in 2017. Their progress scores in reading and writing also showed large gains. Different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make similar progress to other pupils. In general, pupils from Polish families do at least as well as others.
- Pupils' attainment is rising. For example, in 2016 no Year 6 pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined. In 2017, half of Year 6 did. The scores for the national check of phonics skills in Year 1 show a similar pattern of improvement. Despite these gains, very few pupils reach greater depth in any of the national curriculum assessments.
- The school's own records indicate that pupils in all years make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This was confirmed by the work the inspector saw in pupils' books and during observations of teaching and learning. Samples of pupils' work retained by the school from the start and end of last school year provide particularly convincing evidence of the changes that have happened.
- The school's systems to measure pupils' progress in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics are at an earlier stage of development than for these core subjects. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils also make strong gains across the curriculum, for example in science, music and religious education.
- Pupils enjoy reading and develop the skills they need to read to find out information as well as for pleasure.
- Leaders' commitment to give pupils a broad range of experiences supports pupils' development of the skills they need to be successful in the future. For example, in the 'St Cuthbert's Award'. This is a programme prepared by the school which encourages

pupils in key stage 2 to complete a wide range of academic and social challenges. The successful development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness contributes well to preparing them for the next stage of their education as they move through the school and eventually to secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders and governors have changed the arrangements for early years provision in the school since the previous inspection. Nursery-age children are now provided for by a private provider who operates from the Nursery facilities on the school site. While this provision is separate from the school, there is close contact about children who move on to the school's Reception class.
- Children in the Reception class make good progress and learn well. While their starting points are frequently lower than typically seen for children of their age, the proportion making the rapid progress needed to reach the good level of development required to be ready for Year 1 is increasing.
- Teaching is effective. Staff have good relationships with children. This gives children confidence when more formal teaching is taking place. The inspector saw children being skilfully supported in writing their own names. This teaching was closely matched to each child's stage of development. Children enjoyed this activity which further allowed the member of staff to develop pupils' speech and language skills.
- Children are well behaved. They play together well and support each other. For example, the inspector saw children helpfully working together to sort out inside-out sleeves of their outdoor coats.
- Pupils who may face additional challenges are supported well. For example, Polish-speaking children are given support to help build their confidence in speaking English so that they find it easier to play with others.
- The Reception classroom is of a suitable size for the number of children. However, their outdoor space is cramped. Children are provided with interesting resources both inside and out. These resources interest and engage them and provide for the development of their reading, writing, mathematical and social skills. However, the small space outside means that children have more limited access to activities which need more space, for example riding on pedal toys, running or jumping.
- The early years leader is effective. She knows the children well. She works closely with teaching assistants to make sure that children's learning is planned for and assessed. Staff use an internet-based system to share pupils' learning and development with parents. Parents find this helpful. Leaders make home visits as children join the Reception class to make sure that communication with parents gets off to a good start and school staff know each child's needs.
- The Reception classroom and outdoor area are safe. Children are closely supervised throughout the school day.

School details

Unique reference number	112370
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10042439

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joan Hadley
Headteacher	Mr Chris Wilkins
Telephone number	01228 818201
Website	www.st-cuthberts-carlisle.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	secretary@st-cuthberts-carlisle.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 September 2015

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. However, over a quarter are of other White backgrounds. Most of these pupils are from Polish families.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average. There is a high level of deprivation in the school's community.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- There have been a number of significant changes to the school since the previous inspection. These include: changes to governance as the school has joined with St Margaret Mary Catholic Primary School to form the St Ninian's federation; many appointments of new members of staff, including an executive headteacher and a new deputy headteacher; and the transfer of on-site Nursery provision from the school to a private provider. The Nursery provision is now inspected separately by Ofsted.

- The small number of pupils in Year 6 in 2016 means that the school is exempt from meeting the government's current floor standard for pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all years of the school, including the early years. One such observation was completed jointly with the executive headteacher. He observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and during breaktimes. He visited the before-school club and after-school activities.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, and a group of teachers and other members of staff. He had individual conversations with some members of staff including the early years leader. He met formally with a group of pupils and spoke with others during lessons and at other times during the school day. The inspector met a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector met a representative of the local authority, together with the headteacher of another school who is involved in review and evaluation of St Cuthbert's School. The inspector spoke by telephone to a representative of the diocese and met the school chaplain.
- The inspector examined pupils' books during lessons and during a scrutiny of samples of written work across a range of pupils and subjects. The scrutiny was carried out jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- The inspector heard some pupils read and talked to them about reading.
- The inspector reviewed documents, including school policies, safeguarding information, the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, and information about pupils' progress and the impact of teaching.
- Eleven responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were received. The inspector spoke with parents and other family members at the start and end of the school day. Eleven members of staff completed an online survey provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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