

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 November 2018

Mr Shaun Dillon
Headteacher
St Cuthberts Roman Catholic Primary School Aided
Lovaine Place
North Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE29 0BU

Dear Mr Dillon

Short inspection of St Cuthberts Roman Catholic Primary School Aided

Following my visit to the school on 23 October 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The visionary, innovative and resolute leadership that you, your senior leaders and governors provide ensures that the school continues to improve. You and your staff at all levels share a passion that successfully provides a curriculum that excites, stimulates, engages and develops pupils' life experiences. You are driven by a belief that everyone should be included and all pupils should thrive and develop across a range of activities and opportunities. You have successfully created a place where everyday experiences are vibrant and pupils are happy. In addition, many pupils who need to catch up do so, and those that are vulnerable begin to thrive. Your effective leadership has also ensured all the aspects identified in the previous inspection have been addressed; teaching and learning in mathematics has improved and playtimes are stimulating and engaging.

Pupils feel safe in school. They confirm that pupils rarely, if ever, disrupt learning. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying in its many forms, including internet-based and racist bullying.

In your school, pupils are polite, courteous and behave well. They have good attitudes to learning. They strive to improve their work, take pride in their successes and are very well prepared for their next steps in education. Pupils are clear about what they need to do in lessons, work with purpose and have positive attitudes to their learning. They take care in their work; their writing is neat and mathematics

work is laid out with accuracy. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are given access to all the opportunities you provide and begin to catch up quickly in reading, writing and mathematics. Opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding and thinking are sometimes hindered by limitations in pupils' ability to recall key facts, particularly in subjects other than mathematics and English.

Parents and carers that I spoke with, and others who made their views known, were enthusiastic and passionate in their advocacy of the school and how it supports their children's learning. They feel well engaged and informed about the progress their children are making and thrilled by the variety of activities their children participate in. Parents of children who have SEN and/or disabilities are highly complimentary of the work of you and your team in supporting them. Parents raised no concerns about behaviour and bullying and say their children are happy, safe and thoroughly enjoy school.

You and your governors have a clear strategic overview of what is working well in the school and what needs to improve further. Your self-evaluation is accurate and based on a realistic view of the challenges facing the school. Your vision and ambition for the pupils in the school drive your improvement priorities and ensure that many of the strengths evident in the school are not lost in the process. You have built on these strengths and have enhanced the culture of reflecting on your practices. As a result, exemplary practice is evident, such as within the curriculum, in approaches to homework and in playtime provision. Some teaching is also outstanding. You know that strengthening the quality of teaching even further, so that teaching is more consistently outstanding, is an important next step.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. You, ably supported by your assistant headteacher and the governor who holds responsibility for safeguarding, ensure that a culture of safeguarding is established and helps keep children safe. Your systems, training, checks and updates make sure all staff have a detailed understanding of how children must be kept safe and ensure that risks are identified. You and your leaders, including governors, have processes in place to check the suitability and appointment of staff and keep this information regularly updated.

Staff and pupils have strong and supportive relationships, which ensure that pupils can share their worries and concerns with confidence. In addition, the curriculum, including 'diversity week' and the focus on mental health and well-being, helps pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe in a range of situations, including when online. Planned themes, lessons and assemblies inform the personal, social and health education programme and have an emphasis on ensuring that pupils are developing an understanding of positive relationships.

Inspection findings

- Many children enter the early years with skills, knowledge and understanding which are lower than that typical for their age. In early years, adults provide an engaging and stimulating learning environment. They know children well and are skilled at providing appropriately challenging activities, which appeal to the children's interests and sparks their curiosity. They ask children questions to help extend and consolidate their learning. As a result, children make good and sometimes outstanding progress. By the end of Reception Year, the proportion of children reaching the standard expected for their age is at least in line with national averages, and is sometimes better. Even so, children's progress in their communication skills is occasionally held back because opportunities to develop, model and insist on good speaking and listening are sometimes overlooked. Further developing this is an important next step.
- In key stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good and sometimes outstanding progress. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those that need to catch up. By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards of attainment are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are very well prepared to thrive in their next stages of education.
- Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is at least good and is sometimes outstanding. Teachers' engaging personalities, enthusiasm and strong subject knowledge are all highly evident. They establish very caring and supportive relationships with pupils, providing carefully structured work to support their learning. Teachers are successful in engaging and exciting pupils to help them maintain and build on their varying needs and interests. Inspection evidence, including a review of pupils' work in books, shows that some outstanding teaching practice is evident. This, along with the school's own information showing teachers' assessments of current pupils' attainment and progress, indicates that sometimes pupils make rapid progress. However, this is not consistently the case. Further work is needed to ensure that teaching and learning are more consistently outstanding across the year groups and subjects.
- You have developed a vibrant, interesting and engaging curriculum. It provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities as well as many other opportunities for pupils to gain experiences beyond the classroom. This is a school strength and reflects your passion to ensure that all pupils encounter real-life experiences while maintaining a strong focus on developing their basic skills in English and mathematics. Learning is flavoured with regular educational visits, homework topics, and a plethora of visitors, including authors. Pupils are rightly proud of their commendable achievements from taking part in activities such as a coast-to-coast bicycle ride for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, and the school choir performing at the Sage theatre in Gateshead. Your work with a local care home enables pupils to develop their relationships with others from older generations. Playtime provision now enhances your wider curriculum successfully, with, for example, opportunities for role-play, den building, small world play and various games.

- The curriculum is well planned. All subjects are covered systematically and it provides a raft of rich experiences for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge. Pupils' basic skills and knowledge in English and mathematics develop particularly effectively because they are provided with many opportunities to use and apply their skills across the varying curriculum subjects. However, in subjects beyond English and mathematics, such as in history and geography, some pupils find it hard to remember what they have learned. As a consequence, this sometimes holds them back from developing or applying their learning to a deeper level. Developing this is an important next step for the school.
- You check the effectiveness of teachers' work carefully. You and your team hold weekly 'typicality walks' to check that teaching practices are consistent and that school policies are adhered to. You effectively feed back to staff strengths in their practice, as well as what aspects can be improved further. You check regularly that expectations of what pupils should achieve are high. This reflects in most pupils' work.
- Since the last inspection, your work to strengthen the quality of teaching in mathematics has paid off. In mathematics, pupils' learning builds on a strong core of understanding of basic skills, including number facts. Pupils apply their skills to solve problems and to use reasoning and logic. As a result, they develop a secure knowledge of how to use their skills in a variety of methods and apply them in various situations. Teaching in mathematics is consistently good, and, in some cases, exceptional teaching helps pupils to make rapid progress.
- Governors are fully involved in shaping the school's strategic direction and priorities. They are clear about the school's strengths and aspects that can be improved further. They share in school leaders' vision, and your unequivocal passion, to ensure that the school meets the needs of all children and to broaden their horizons whatever their background or starting point. Governors have the skills and knowledge needed to effectively challenge school leaders. They ensure that safeguarding is effective and that the additional funding used for disadvantaged pupils is used well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in the early years, staff promote children's skills speaking and listening skills consistently
- the quality of teaching is strengthened even further so that pupils make even quicker progress across a wide range of subjects and year groups
- pupils' ability to remember learning, including recalling key facts, and to be able to think deeply in subjects beyond English and mathematics are improved.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I held discussions with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, and with the local authority adviser.
- I observed learning in all classrooms. A joint observation was carried out with the headteacher and an assistant headteacher.
- I listened to some pupils read, looked at pupils' work and held discussions with a group of pupils.
- I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at playtimes and in lessons.
- I looked at the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and talked with some parents at the beginning of the school day.
- In addition, I looked at a wide range of documentation, including information about the performance of pupils, the school's self-evaluation, as well as information on the curriculum, safeguarding and other key policies.
- I checked the school website to ensure that it has the information that parents should have access to.