

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. CUTHBERT'S RC SCHOOL

Stechford, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103470

Headteacher: Mr Patrick Doohan

Reporting inspector: John Francis
17976

Dates of inspection: 3rd to 4th July 2000

Inspection number: 190321

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Gumbleberry's Close
Off Cotterills Lane
Stechford
Birmingham

Postcode: B8 2PS

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of responsible officer: Rev Paul Devaney

Date of previous inspection: October 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Cuthbert's is a one-form entry Catholic primary school with 251 pupils on roll, including 50 part-time children in the nursery. There are broadly equal numbers of boys and girls, although there is a gender imbalance in year groups. The school serves the Catholic parish, and the immediate area around the school is mainly rented accommodation including high-rise flats. Most pupils are of white European heritage and there are very few pupils of other ethnic groups: only two pupils have English as an additional language. The school population is fairly stable with only ten pupils leaving and five starting during the last year. Approximately 32 per cent of pupils are eligible for a free school meal, which is above the national average. There are 44 pupils on the register of special needs, which is broadly in line with the national average, and three pupils have statements of special needs. Pupils' attainment on entry is close to average in English and mathematics.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St. Cuthbert's is a very effective school with many very good features. The teachers have high expectations of pupils' attainment, and when this is linked with pupils' very good attitudes, the result is very good progress over time. By the time pupils are 11, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above the average of similar schools. Pupils work hard and work well together: good relationships are a feature of the school. The headteacher and staff are an effective working team, well supported by the governing body. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- During their time in school, pupils make very good progress and attain high standards;
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and clear direction to work of the school;
- The quality of teaching is good;
- Relationships throughout the school, along with pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development, are all very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in information technology throughout the school;
- Experimental and investigative science, particularly for higher attaining pupils;
- The quality of marking in some classes.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since it was last inspected in October 1996, the school has continued to improve. The trend has been one of improved standards year-on-year, and at a faster rate than schools nationally. The school has addressed the action points from the last inspection relating to curriculum and assessment very effectively. There is a clear assessment policy which enables the school to set challenging targets and provide detailed information for the next teacher. However, there is still some further work to be done on improving marking to ensure a consistently high standard across the school. Work on developing the whole curriculum has been successful and pupils are now much more aware of multicultural issues

in society. Standards in information technology, however, have not kept pace with improvements nationally, and the low numbers of computers and associated software prevents the school from meeting all of the statutory requirements for the subject. However, the school has recently put forward a bid for additional funding and has committed funds of its own to improve the provision. Nevertheless, the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	A	B	A
mathematics	C	B	A	A
science	C	C	B	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards of attainment are good and test results continue to improve year-on-year. By the time they are seven and eleven, pupils are attaining standards well above the national average, and when compared with similar schools, standards for both seven and eleven-year-olds are high. Work in pupils' books shows consistent improvement and good progress over time in all subjects and in all classes. Standards in information technology, however, are below average by the time pupils are eleven.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to work, they are keen to learn and give their best at all times. They enjoy school life and value education.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good and frequently excellent. Pupils show very good self-discipline.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good; they play and work together well. Older pupils have many responsibilities around the school, both organisational and social, and carry these out well.
Attendance	Attendance is below the national average, although the trend over the last three years is one of improvement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and almost six out of ten lessons were of good or very good quality: one lesson in five was very good. Changes to the nursery timetable due to previously organised events, meant that the lessons observed were not typical of the normal organisation of the nursery. The teaching of mathematics, including numeracy, is very good throughout the school. The teaching of English, including reading and writing is generally good, and is particularly effective at Key Stage 2 (7 – 11 year olds). Teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to learn and share these objectives with the pupils. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and are increasingly involving pupils in their own assessment and target setting.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and relevant and caters for pupils of all abilities and interests. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by pupils. The requirements to teach all aspects of information technology are not yet being met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good support is provided for these pupils and their needs are addressed very effectively. They make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No additional support is needed for these pupils beyond what teachers provide through their planning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' moral and spiritual development is firmly rooted in Christian principles, which ensure pupils develop a good understanding of their responsibilities. Social development is very good and pupils' cultural development is being enhanced through using the local community. Teachers are good role models.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A caring ethos is evident in all of the school's practices. The values of care and friendship are very evident. Assessment is used effectively to target areas for improvement. There are good systems in place for monitoring pupils' progress and attainment and for the general health, safety and welfare of pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is responsible for the very good ethos and clear direction. He is well organised, with his finger on the pulse of the school. The deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators are very effective in their role, for example, analysing data and offering advice and support to teachers. The monitoring of teaching and learning, and teachers' planning, and the response to this are all part of the school's commitment to raising standards.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very interested in the school's development and many are actively involved in the work of the school. There are clear and effective systems for reporting and evaluating the effectiveness of the school. They are supportive of the work of the headteacher and co-ordinators.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are very good systems in place for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work. What works or does not work is carefully analysed and, where necessary, changes are made in response to this. Co-ordinators provide good support through their monitoring and evaluation of the work of their subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use is made of all staff and resources. The school's budget is closely linked to the priorities of the school's development plan and effective use is made of additional funds provided for specific purposes.

All staff in the school have a clearly shared vision and sense of purpose. Monitoring of teaching and learning is effective and assessment data is analysed and evaluated well to guide the work of the school. There are good systems within the school for agreeing the standards of pupils' work, especially writing, which the school identified as an area for development. Resources are satisfactory, with the exception of information technology. The budget and financial decisions are closely linked to school improvement and ensuring best value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high expectations the school has for pupils' achievement and behaviour and the success it achieves in these; • The progress pupils make; • The effective way in which the school is led and managed; • The attitudes the school fosters in enabling pupils to become mature and responsible members of society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside of school.

The parents' views of the school's strengths are supported by the inspection. Parents have very positive feelings towards the school, and praise the work of the headteacher and staff. The school tries hard to involve parents and has some success in this. Responses from the parents' questionnaire, the pre-inspection meeting and written comments, indicate a high level of satisfaction from parents. Although some parents feel the school could do more in the way of after school activities, others praise the variety, and feel there is always something productive every night. The inspection team agrees with this second viewpoint.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

During their time in the school, pupils make very good progress and attain high standards

1. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, test results over the last three years have shown a generally steady increase in pupils' attainment at the end of both Key Stage 1 (by the age of seven) and Key Stage 2 (by eleven), but more particularly at Key Stage 1. Standards throughout are well above the average for similar schools and have improved at a faster rate than schools nationally.
2. Pupils read well and enjoy books. Good questioning by teachers explores such things as the traits of the main character in the story, and allows pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through giving extended answers. Pupils have the necessary skills to allow them to make the most of their reading and older pupils read both for pleasure and for research in other subjects of the curriculum. Writing skills are developing well. The school identified pupils' writing as an area of weakness and has put in place an effective programme to remedy this. Evidence of pupils' ability to use these skills was seen where pupils in Year 3 wrote sentences to explain data presented to them in the form of graphs and charts. The notes they made from this were then used to write clear, informative sentences, interpreting what they had seen. Similar skills of using notes were being developed with the oldest pupils in school with the emphasis on using carefully chosen language to make their writing as concise as possible, while retaining the essential information from the text.
3. By the time they are 11, pupils' attainment in mathematics is very good. This is as a result of very good teaching, particularly at the end of Key Stage 1 and throughout Key Stage 2. Teachers have good mathematical knowledge and a good understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy. The quality of teachers' questions, the use of accurate mathematical vocabulary and the way they involve pupils in explaining their working methods are all important factors in improving pupils' understanding.
4. Attainment in science is above the national average, although the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels is broadly average. The oldest pupils have a good scientific knowledge, but not enough use is made of experimental and investigative science to enable them to develop a deeper understanding of scientific concepts. Good investigative work was seen, but this was more a vehicle to allow pupils to use the knowledge they already had rather than as a way of them coming to an understanding through applying scientific principles. In another class, however, pupils were able to present and test their initial ideas of how sound travels and, through experimenting, come to some conclusions about this. In both classes, groups worked together well and pupils were able to share roles and responsibilities sensibly and fairly.
5. Work in pupils' books shows steady and consistent improvement over time for all subjects with the exception of information technology.

The headteacher provides very good leadership and clear direction to work of the school.

6. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is responsible for the very good ethos, clear direction and focus on high standards. He is well organised with his finger on the pulse of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher form an effective management team. They analyse pupils' attainment and evaluate performance data well to guide the work of the school. Teaching, learning and planning are rigorously monitored, and the information gained from this is acted upon to improve quality and set targets for further improvement. This is all part of the school's commitment to raising standards. Responsibility is given to subject co-ordinators, who are in turn accountable for their work. They are very effective in their role, for example, analysing data and offering advice and support to teachers. The aims of the school are clearly reflected in its everyday life and all staff in the school have a clearly shared vision and sense of purpose.

The quality of teaching is good.

7. All teachers prepare their lessons thoroughly. They are skilful at identifying clear learning objectives for the lesson and helpfully share these with the pupils. Lessons proceed at a good pace to maintain pupils' interest. Changes to the nursery timetable due to previously planned events, meant that lessons seen were not typical of the normal organisation in the nursery unit. A strong feature of many lessons is the way teachers organise pupils into small groups, not only for literacy and mathematics, but also for many other subjects. The success of these is a measure of how well they plan for pupils of all abilities. Where groups contain pupils of all levels of ability, as seen in a science lesson in Year 5, higher attaining pupils provide good support for others without dominating the work of the group. Pupils' very good attitudes to work and their relationships with others enable pupils to take an active role by either offering ideas or acting as a scribe for the group.
8. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. In science, one teacher used her own good subject knowledge to question pupils on how sound travels and test out their ideas. She had high expectations of pupils' thinking powers and insisted on the use of correct scientific vocabulary.
9. Teaching in literacy is good and often very good. Pupils are taught the basic skills they need and these are developed to extend their learning and show how they can be applied across a range of other subjects. Good teaching for reception pupils had them drafting their work to correct and improve it and use this to develop their reading skills by presenting it to the rest of the class. Not only were pupils beginning to read confidently, they are also developing their listening skills from an early age by appreciating the contributions of others. These are then built on as pupils move through the school. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, the quality of the teacher's questions encouraged pupils to offer their own interpretations about whether the main character was clever, greedy, etc.
10. Teaching in mathematics is invariably very good and pupils are constantly challenged to extend their learning. A lesson for Year 4 pupils that focussed on sorting and classifying information using a 'Carroll' diagram, had pupils measuring angles and reinforcing their understanding of symmetry and right angles in addition to the main objective of the lesson. The quality of the plenary session at the end of the lesson helped to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding through the use

of correct mathematical language such as 'criteria' and linked it effectively to earlier work using 'Venn' diagrams to sort information.

Relationships throughout the school, along with pupils' attitudes, their behaviour and personal development, are all very good

11. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good and frequently excellent. They show high levels of self-discipline and often receive letters of compliment on their behaviour when taking part in out-of-school activities. Parents are pleased with the very good attitudes and behaviour and feel this is all part of the high expectations the school has for all its pupils.
12. Older pupils have many responsibilities around school, and whether it is setting out the hall for assembly or escorting younger pupils in from break times, they carry these out with a sense of pride and duty. Pupils, even the very youngest, are tolerant of others and are willing to support each other in lessons, for example, during group work. No one is dismissive of the efforts of others and often compliment each other on their successes. Discussions with pupils showed how much they value their education. The strong spiritual and moral content of assemblies helps to strengthen the community feel of the school. This is further reinforced by the opportunities provided for all pupils to show how well they can achieve both in school and through outside activities, as in the example of the pupils whose achievements in a charity walk were celebrated during an assembly.
13. The school's strong Christian ethos comes through in all of its work, and the consideration shown by pupils and staff is exemplified in the way they look after the garden dedicated to the memory of a former pupil. Parents are rightly proud of the way the school fosters the sort of attitudes that allows pupils to become mature and responsible citizens.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in information technology throughout the school

14. There is evidence throughout the school of pupils using information technology to support their work in many areas of the curriculum. Classrooms and corridors have, for example, displays of pupils' writing using a word processor or of displays of graphs showing data handling in mathematics. Pupils' basic skills in entering and retrieving data are satisfactory and pupils can give instructions to a programmable floor robot. However, it is not possible for pupils to learn many of the higher level skills needed because of the poor quality and quantity of resources. In the school's last report, standards in information technology were judged to be average. Since then greater demands have been placed on schools and St. Cuthbert's has not kept pace with the changes. The current number of computers in school in relation to the number of pupils is well below the national average and does not provide sufficient time for pupils to practice and perfect all of the skills they now need to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
15. The school is very keen to improve this situation and, as well as targeting some of its own money towards this, is currently bidding for money which would provide a significant improvement to the range and quality of equipment. Although they have little opportunity at present to fully develop pupils' work in information technology,

teachers have, as a group, taken it upon themselves to develop their own skills in preparation for the new resources the school hopes to purchase.

Experimental and investigative science, particularly for higher attaining pupils

16. Pupils' attainment in science is good at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils have a good knowledge of, for example, how the human ear works. Teaching, following the school's scheme of work, covers all of the Attainment Targets, but has a heavy emphasis on those relating to knowledge of life processes, materials and the physical aspects of science. Where coverage is weaker is in the area relating to scientific enquiry.
17. There is evidence in most classes of some experimental work, but often this is directed by the teacher and limits the response pupils can make to the investigation. For the oldest pupils in school, this investigative work often comes at the end of the year after pupils have completed the national tests. Whilst it uses the knowledge pupils have gained from their study, it is less effective in promoting understanding and in developing their thinking and observational skills from an early stage.
18. Good examples of scientific enquiry were seen where pupils investigated the characteristics of various types of soil. Pupils worked well in small groups and shared the tasks fairly. The level of discussion in these groups was good. However, while they understood much of the factual information they were working on, their ability to observe and interpret what they saw was weaker. Scrutiny of pupils' books also shows that the structure of the lessons often prevents the higher attaining pupils from planning experiments for themselves and following other independent lines of investigation. Where this was seen, for example, in a Year 5 lesson on how sound travels, pupils were much more imaginative in their approach to investigating and made very astute observations and put forward plausible theories as to what the outcome might be.
19. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour throughout the school provide the perfect conditions for teachers to build on and extend this aspect of the school's work. There are encouraging signs of improvement, with the recently appointed science co-ordinator already identifying this as an area for development, and planning to revise the scheme of work integrating scientific enquiry as an essential part of science work in school, rather than being incidental to the teaching.

The quality of marking in some classes

20. All teachers regularly and conscientiously mark pupils' work and are supportive of pupils' efforts. The best marking gives pupils a clear indication of what they need to do to improve their work further and sets short-term targets for improvement. There is, however, still some variation in the quality and effectiveness of this, and not all marking identifies frequent errors that pupils make or relates sufficiently to the learning intentions of the lesson. This was an area for development at the time of the last inspection, and while significant improvements have been made, further work is needed to bring it all to a uniformly high standard and raise individual pupils' standards even further.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

21. The school should now:

- 1) improve standards in information technology by having sufficient resources to allow the whole curriculum to be taught and so meet statutory requirements;#
- 2) improve the quality and range of investigative and experimental work in science to improve pupils' investigative skills, particularly for the higher attaining pupils;#
- 3) improve the consistency in the quality of marking so that it all relates clearly to the learning objectives for the lesson and indicates to pupils what they have to do to improve their work.

these areas have already been identified by the school and are included in their development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

22. Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

23. Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	20	35	45	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

24. Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	226
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	80

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	44

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

25. Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

26. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	17	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	17	17
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	32	35	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (93)	100 (97)	100 (93)
	National	82 (80)	83 (85)	87 (83)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	17	17
	Girls	18	18	15
	Total	34	35	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (93)	100 (97)	91 (93)
	National	82 (80)	86 (83)	87 (81)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

27. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	20	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	18	18
	Girls	11	11	12
	Total	26	29	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (89)	85 (71)	88 (71)
	National	70 (63)	69 (62)	78 (68)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	15	18
	Girls	12	11	13
	Total	26	26	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (82)	76 (68)	91 (68)
	National	68 (63)	69 (64)	75 (68)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

28. Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	182
Any other minority ethnic group	4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

29. Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

30. Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.1
Average class size	28.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	100

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

31. Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	524,815
Total expenditure	531,815
Expenditure per pupil	2,119
Balance brought forward from previous year	19,877
Balance carried forward to next year	12,877

32. Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	251
Number of questionnaires returned	91

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	23	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	27	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	27	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	44	8	3	1
The teaching is good.	78	22	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	33	5	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	14	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	19	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	66	29	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	80	19	0	1	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	24	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	38	15	2	9