

St Bega's RC Primary School

Thorpe Street, Hartlepool, County Durham, TS24 0DX

Inspection dates 16–17 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school motto, 'Care, Courtesy, Concern', is alive in all aspects of school life.
- The headteacher has built a highly cohesive senior team, which leads the school with striking effectiveness. The team, ably supported by an excellent governing body, has ensured that all pupils receive an outstanding education.
- The systems in school to support individuals are first class. As soon as teachers spot that a pupil is struggling, either with school or an aspect of learning, individualised programmes are put into place to support them. These are highly effective.
- As a result, any gaps in the standards reached by different groups of pupils by the end of Year 6 are eradicated. Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress, and the standards disadvantaged pupils reach are the same as those of their peers.
- Standards reached by the end of Year 6 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents outstanding progress from pupils' starting points.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Much is inspirational. Teachers have high expectations of all of their pupils. However, leaders recognise that the role of teaching assistants could be further developed to maximise their impact on pupils' achievement.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in lessons across the curriculum is strong. Pupils write at length with accuracy in a range of subjects, and they see mathematical links in different subject areas.
- The quality of marking and feedback is excellent.
- Children make outstanding progress from their starting points in all areas of learning in the early years. This means that, this year, the vast majority of children have the skills they need in reading, writing and mathematics in order to make a good start in Year 1.
- Behaviour is outstanding. In lessons, pupils are fully committed to their learning, and when moving around the school they are sensible and thoughtful. Pupils are courteous to staff and to each other.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. As a result, pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons or parts of lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils about their learning in lessons and their safety in school. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' work in lessons and analysed samples of pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body and teaching staff, including senior leaders. Discussions were held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the school's staff questionnaires and evaluated the 13 responses to the online survey (Parent View) in addition to questionnaires that the school had commissioned.
- Inspectors observed the overall work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's data about pupils' current progress. They also studied documents relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance. They looked at the school's review of its own performance, its development and improvement plan, and subject-specific plans.
- Inspectors also looked at a range of other evidence including school displays, the school website and evidence representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hargreaves

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Bega's RC Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, is higher than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding the school receives for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than that found nationally.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school partway through the academic year is higher than usually found.
- Early years provision is part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception Year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school is currently providing support to other schools in the local authority in developing an understanding of assessment. It is contributing computing support via a specialist leader of education to the Hartlepool Teaching Schools Alliance.
- The school has the following awards, among others: Skipping School Gold Award; Golden Apple Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the role of teaching assistants to maximise their impact on pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The leadership of the school is inspirational. The dynamic headteacher, working very closely with the senior team and governing body, provides strong leadership for the school. Everyone wants to do their best in the school. As a result, the quality of education that the pupils receive is outstanding. Leaders' commitment to continue to improve and their proven track record indicate that there is capacity to improve even further.
- Middle leaders are effective in leading individual subject areas and ensuring that standards are high across the curriculum.
- The way in which the school uses information about the progress pupils are making to help it plan for further improvements is excellent. Staff know which pupils are in danger of falling behind and give them extra help. As a result, pupils make excellent progress and are well prepared for their transfer to secondary school.
- The school has a thorough and detailed understanding of its strengths and areas for development. All staff are relentless in seeking further improvement. An example of this is the way in which the school has tackled attendance. Noting that there was an issue here, plans were put in place to appoint a member of staff with responsibility for increasing attendance. The impact has been phenomenal, with attendance figures increasing rapidly.
- Teachers and leaders are committed to improving the quality of teaching. This includes the work of teaching assistants and small-group work. All work together effectively to share ideas and reflect on the success of individual activities. They share their knowledge of assessment with other local schools. One colleague supports other schools with the computing curriculum.
- The curriculum is innovative and exciting. Topics and themes chosen really motivate pupils. External visits and work outside the classroom are used as a starting point for many pieces of extended writing. Within school time, pupils study music and French among other subjects. The school is using the additional primary school physical education and sport funding successfully. Provision for physical education is outstanding and there is a wide range of additional activities after school. The school ensures that pupils have access to local and regional competitions.
- The school places very strong emphasis on promoting equal opportunities for all of its pupils. Discrimination rarely occurs, with all staff expecting pupils to learn and play together. The school uses the additional pupil premium money to great effect. As a result, the speed with which eligible pupils make progress is helping them narrow the gaps between the standards they reach compared to other pupils.
- Through the work of the school, British values and good relations are promoted effectively. The spiritual development of the pupils helps them focus on empathy and the needs of others. The curriculum includes all of the pupils. Beyond being taught about different cultures and lifestyles, they learn tolerance and show it to others.
- The school works well with parents and they, in turn, feel that the school listens to their concerns. Each week the headteacher publishes the 'Wednesday letter', which keeps parents very well informed about what is happening at school. Homework is also used effectively as a tool to involve parents in the life of the school, and to help their children make progress.
- Safeguarding measures are very effective and meet statutory requirements.
- Local authority support is both effective and light touch because there are no concerns about leaders' ability to develop the quality of education at the school further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective. It reviews its own procedures and processes regularly, and thinks carefully about how to have the greatest level of impact. The current cycle of meetings allows the governing body to steer the priorities of the school with efficiency.
 - The governing body works closely with the headteacher and senior leaders. Governors visit regularly, speak to staff and pupils, and have a deep understanding of data related to pupils' performance. They have a clear knowledge of the strengths of the school, including in relation to the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. Governors challenge the school where needed. For example, they ensure that procedures to check the performance of staff are used to link the quality of work and pay progression. They make sure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
 - The governing body manages the finances of the school effectively. It has a good understanding of the school's finances in relation to the pupil premium and primary school sport funding, and ensures that this is having a positive impact on achievement.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and their attitudes to learning are excellent. These contribute significantly to their outstanding achievement. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and work very well, both with each other and independently.
- Around the school, pupils are calm and act thoughtfully and courteously towards each other and adults. They are polite and show respect for their environment. Some older pupils take responsibility for ensuring that younger ones are safe. For example, at break time, Year 6 pupils make sure that everyone has someone to play with, and they spend time with younger pupils who are feeling sad.
- The spiritual aspect of the life of the school helps pupils to develop a deep empathy towards each other. They use prayer stations to think about themselves, others and the world. This has a positive impact on the way they interact with each other.
- The active school council ensures that everyone's voice is heard on a variety of issues at school. Members also spend time with governors to ensure that their views are heard by everyone.
- The leadership of the school has developed a range of rewards programmes, and pupils are appreciative of these. Sometimes pupils get a 'lucky dip' in a special box, which reveals a variety of prizes such as pink sunglasses or toy cars.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying. They say that unkind behaviour is rare and that any instances are quickly resolved. They also say that they feel confident to talk to an adult if they have any concerns; alternatively, they know they can talk to older pupils to flag any concerns to a teacher.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The school's systems and procedures around child protection, staff training and safer recruitment are excellent. Similarly, robust systems are in place to identify risks, manage these appropriately and so prevent any pupils coming to harm.
- The care of pupils who are considered to be potentially the most vulnerable is excellent. Staff look out for their welfare, ensure that their needs are met and that their learning is not interrupted.
- Pupils are taught how to identify potential risks to themselves and others, and they understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils were able to describe the possible dangers associated with the internet and mobile technologies, and to explain how they protected themselves against potential harm.
- The school's creative curriculum includes a variety of trips and visits away from the school, which are managed very well.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and feel very safe. Consequently, their attendance has improved markedly recently and is now above average.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress in a wide range of subjects because the quality of teaching is outstanding.
- The very best of teaching at St Bega's combines three elements: a wide range of teaching strategies designed to ensure that all of the pupils are interested in the tasks in hand; high expectations of standards in that particular subject area; and a focus on the development of reading, writing and mathematics across the curriculum. One striking example was a Year 6 history lesson, where pupils were asked to empathise with evacuees from the Second World War. Teaching strategies were interesting, concepts discussed were at a high level, and both literacy and mathematical skills were being practised. Much teaching seen during the inspection was inspirational.
- Lessons are well thought out. Teachers draw on secure subject knowledge and expertise to ensure that pupils are challenged by whatever they have to do.
- Evidence from pupils' work shows very good depth to learning in reading, writing and mathematics. This is also true, for example, of history, geography and science, and highly commendable artwork is displayed.
- Both teachers and teaching assistants identify any pupils who are struggling in aspects of their learning, and use specific teaching programmes to help them move on. Personalised learning and intervention programmes (PLIPs) are put in place and discussed at length by teachers and leaders. This, combined with specialised support for those who have disabilities or special educational needs and any additional support required by disadvantaged pupils, leads to all groups of pupils making outstanding progress.

Occasionally, opportunities are missed to maximise the role and impact of teaching assistants.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and accurately. They tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work and expect them to do so.
- Teachers stretch and challenge the most-able pupils well. When teachers spot that a pupil has mastered a new skill, they encourage them to move onto a new challenge.
- Information on pupils' prior learning is very well used to target pupils' needs and to change the structure of classes and groups. The variety of themes and topics in the curriculum to inspire pupils' learning is both wide ranging and of a high quality.
- The teaching of reading and phonics (sounds and letters) is a significant strength. Pupils develop these skills at different rates but any gaps in the progress individual pupils are making close by Year 6. Teaching is very responsive to the ability of each individual pupil.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- From below typical starting points, pupils make excellent progress. Their overall achievement by the time they leave St Bega's is outstanding because of the way the school provides for their varying needs.
- Each year group is relatively small. Some year groups have a higher proportion of pupils with additional needs or a high number of pupils who leave or join the school other than at the usual times. Children start school in Nursery with skills and abilities below those usually found for their age. Nevertheless, they make excellent progress from their starting points, particularly in communication and language skills. This year, most are ready to make a good start in Year 1. Pupils continue making progress so that, by Year 2, most pupils reach standards that are average or above in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, they reach standards that are above average. School and national data regarding pupils' progress show continuing above-average proportions of pupils making expected progress and better-than-expected progress through Key Stage 2. Overall, in relation to their starting points, this represents outstanding achievement by the pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils receive effective teaching and guidance for their personal needs. As a result, in 2014 these pupils made outstanding progress. They often made more rapid progress from their starting points than pupils who are not eligible for the pupil premium. The standards they reached were approximately six months behind those of other pupils in school in reading, writing and mathematics, and one term behind those of other pupils nationally in these subjects. Inspection evidence indicates that current pupils are making outstanding progress and that gaps continue to close for those who are disadvantaged. They make more rapid progress than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported exceptionally well. By Year 6, the standards they reach in reading, writing and mathematics are typically higher than those of similar groups of pupils nationally, and most make impressive progress.
- The most-able pupils also make outstanding progress. They respond well to additional challenges. An increasing proportion of pupils are working at Level 5.
- Due to the skill of the teachers in matching work to pupils' abilities and helping pupils who are struggling, those pupils who join the school at other times than September also make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. Year 6 pupils read fluently and show a very clear understanding of what they are reading. They choose suitably challenging books for themselves and have positive attitudes towards reading. This is because the teaching of reading and phonics at school is both fun and interesting from a very early age.
- The high expectations that staff have for each individual pupil are having a very positive impact on their attitude to learning, and the progress they are making.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- The leadership of the early years is outstanding, as are the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the behaviour and progress of children.
- Children start in Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age, especially in communication and language and in social and emotional development. They make outstanding progress from their starting points, so that this year, most of the children have the skills necessary to make a good start in Year 1. In 2014, fewer children reached this level due to a higher proportion needing additional support in their learning.
- Teaching is precisely matched to every child's needs. Group work, one-to-one sessions and the variety of activities that are chosen by the children all support their progress. The curriculum is broad and exciting and very well resourced. It provides ample opportunities for children to learn both indoors and through active, physical exploration outdoors. The outdoor environment is fabulous.
- Adults constantly check children's progress and make sure they plan activities that help all children to make rapid progress. Adults also make sure the most-able children are challenged. For example, one child was able to describe the difference between a cube and a cuboid accurately, and another had written at some length about Chinese New Year. Parents are involved in the learning of their children through interesting homework tasks.
- During the inspection, the children in Nursery received a letter from Mr Slug who needed ideas as to how he could go faster so that he was not left behind by other garden animals. Children were excited and eager to learn; they were engaged in a wide range of activities linked to speed and slugs. Inspection evidence indicates that this sort of imaginative activity is commonplace.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) is excellent.
- Children work exceptionally well together, wait their turn and talk eagerly with each other and members of staff. A number of children were working with foam and playdough, and were focused on helping each other. Children are confident, able to communicate with staff and others with ease, and show a delight in their learning.
- Staff regard safeguarding as a high priority. Responses to the online questionnaire show that parents are very happy with the way the school cares for their children and say they feel that their children are completely safe.
- The early years leader has a very strong vision for the team, whose members fully share her commitment to the highest standards.

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

Unique reference number	111697
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	461695

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Carroll
Headteacher	Michael Cooney
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2012
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