

St Stephens Roman Catholic Primary School Aided

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108621
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	377786
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2012
Lead inspector	Linda Buller

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eddie Darke
Headteacher	Stephen Fallon
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2006
School address	Bardsey Place Longbenton Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE12 8NU
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Introduction

Inspection team

Linda Buller
John Pattinson

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 17 lessons and observed eight and a half hours of teaching taught by eight teachers. In addition, they held discussions with members of the governing body, groups of pupils and staff and scrutinised a range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation, development planning and the school's assessment records. They examined questionnaire responses from pupils and staff as well as 89 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. Inspectors were unable to take account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection as insufficient responses had been received at the time of the inspection.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a broadly average proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is average. No pupils are identified as disabled. The school meets the current floor standard. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing with only the headteacher and one other member of teaching staff remaining from that time. The headteacher is currently acting as an executive headteacher of this and another local Roman Catholic primary school. The school has recently been accredited as a National Support School and has gained a number of awards, including Investors in People, International School Award, Healthy Schools status, the Activemark, Artsmark and Eco School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher the school successfully meets its key aim to provide all pupils with an exciting, relevant and broad curriculum which generates positive attitudes to learning and a compassion for others.
- Pupils' achievement is good. From starting points, which are for many well below those expected for their age, the vast majority of pupils' attainment is average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. An increasing proportion of pupils are reaching even higher attainment. This represents good progress and means that pupils are in a good position to make the transition to secondary school.
- In Key Stage 2 pupils' progress in lessons varies from that which is satisfactory, to what is for some pupils, outstanding progress. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress when in receipt of specific targeted intervention from well trained staff. In some lessons, their progress is satisfactory when they are given the same tasks as their peers, rather than tasks which develop independence by being specifically matched to their next steps in learning.
- The quality of teaching is usually good and occasionally outstanding. Pupils learn well because teaching is ambitious and skilful. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly to check on their progress. However, the systems to collect and reference the pupils' work against appropriate levels of attainment occasionally lack precision.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils are clear about what is acceptable and what will result in sanctions. Serious bullying and incidents of racial harassment are infrequent. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in various situations, including when using the internet.

- Leadership and management are good. Systems to evaluate the schools work, and the impact which this is having on raising pupils' aspirations and sense of community, are at the heart of the school's success.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching particularly in Key Stage 2 so that pupils make consistently good or better progress by:
 - accurately assessing pupils' work, including the appropriate use of the national guidance provided for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils with special educational needs
 - matching lesson tasks even more sharply to the precise needs of pupils of differing abilities
 - sharing the best practice in marking pupils' work currently evident within the school
 - providing pupils with enough time in all lessons to work independently.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Areas of relative underperformance identified at the last inspection, such as in writing, have been addressed. Pupils' attainment is average and achievement is now good throughout the school and in all subject areas. The vast majority of parents and carers, who expressed their views of the school, agreed that their children make good progress. Inspection evidence supports these positive views. Higher-attaining pupils are usually challenged well enabling them to reach their full potential. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs generally make good progress because of the close, well-focused, intervention strategies. Steps taken to accelerate younger pupils' development of reading skills through structured learning of sounds and letters are having a positive impact. Those that are below age-related expectations on entry to the nursery quickly begin to narrow the gap between their attainment and that of peers. Consequently, the majority of pupils develop broadly average reading skills by the end of Year 2. In lessons in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, learning is effective and children and pupils make good progress because teachers are skilled at planning activities which help pupils to link together the development of their early reading and writing skills. In Year 1, pupils use this knowledge exceptionally well to write descriptions of their favourite characters, such as the Gruffalo, with excellent attempts at accurate spelling and a secure knowledge of adjectives and their purpose.

In Key Stage 2, learning in guided reading sessions is also good as they are very well focused and used to good effect to narrow any gaps in the attainment of different groups. Although broadly average overall, an increasing number of pupils are by the end of Year 6 attaining higher levels than those expected in reading. In past years, pupils' progress as they moved through Key Stage 2 was variable, with progress at times slower in Years 3 and 4. Improvements in the quality of teaching have addressed this issue and in lessons observed many enjoy learning and perform well. Current actions continue to improve the consistency of pupils' progress. However, learning is less effective in some lessons, where room for improvement remains in the accurate assessment of pupils' work and in focusing

sharply on pupils' prior abilities to ensure that all pupils in Years 5 and 6 make up previously lost ground and learn at the very highest rate.

Quality of teaching

In most lessons, teachers are creative in their planning of an imaginative curriculum and a strong feature of learning is the opportunity for pupils to apply their skills in meaningful contexts. This was clearly seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 2, where pupils made great strides in developing their knowledge and skill in using multiplication to increase a recipe to produce a giant cookie. Pupils could not wait to get started on solving the problem and listened to the teachers' instructions with rapt attention. Lessons generally move at a brisk pace, with learning intentions and success criteria made clear to the pupils so they understand what the teacher is looking for in their work. Teachers' high expectations motivate and encourage pupils to try their best.

In Key Stage 2, a small proportion of teaching is satisfactory. This is when teachers talk too much and opportunities for independent working are not as good as in the best lessons. Marking of pupils' work generally helps them to understand what they need to do to improve. The best examples challenge pupils further through the use of extension questions and form the basis of an on-going dialogue between pupils and teachers. This is not yet consistently good practice and in a few instances, marking is scanty and not used to best effect as a means of assessing how well pupils are doing. This together with occasional inaccurate use of national guidance for assessing pupils' work and their progress, including that relating to pupils with special educational needs, can lead to an inaccurate view of how well pupils are doing. Consequently, subsequent tasks do not match pupils' needs as well as those observed in the majority of lessons.

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that their children are well taught. Several comments were very positive about the dedication of the staff.

Teachers effectively promote pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and respect for diversity. In displays and during lessons, pupils are provided with many well-judged opportunities to reflect on their learning and the wider world. Specialist art and music areas support the teaching of visiting specialists and contribute well to pupils' appreciation of beauty, culture and creativity. A specifically designed citizenship programme together with a strong emphasis on the understanding of a variety of cultural traditions is successful in the teaching of personal development skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and behave well in lessons and around the school. They know and understand the purpose of the school's 'Statements to live by' and try hard to comply with them. They show high levels of cooperation in lessons with partners and in groups. The school has clear anti-bullying initiatives including cyber-bullying and both older and younger pupils know what to do if an issue arises. The majority of parents and carers express their confidence in the school to deal with unacceptable behaviour and to ensure pupils' safety. A very small number, in their additional comments, expressed concern of the impact of incidents of bullying involving parents and carers outside the school. Inspection evidence, including that provided by the local community police, confirms that the school is vigilant in dealing with any concerns raised by pupils, parent and carers and in

limiting the impact that these have within school. The school carefully records any incidents of unacceptable behaviour and these confirm that over time day-to-day behaviour is usually of the good quality seen during the inspection. The few incidents that do occur are most often at lunchtimes between older pupils and these are fully investigated and resolved by staff.

Attendance of the majority of pupils is average. The school works diligently to promote the importance of good attendance. However, families taking extended holidays in term-time and the persistent absence of a small number of pupils are hindering further improvement.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's inspiring leadership has led to improvement in many aspects of the school's work. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good because systems to monitor and evaluate the schools work are well embedded and clear strategies to tackle the school's weaknesses have been applied to good effect. Improved subject knowledge, through focused professional development, has led to secure improvements in the quality of teaching. The governing body provides satisfactory support and challenge and is vigilant in ensuring all necessary safeguarding measures are in place.

A broad, rich and varied curriculum including a good range of visits and visitors meets the needs and interests of learners well. Pupils say that the curriculum is exciting and interesting. It takes account of their own experiences and motivates them to raise their aspirations for the future. A themed approach to curriculum planning provides many opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. They learn to share, challenge, reflect and explore creativity. In a Year 4 lesson, thoroughly interactive learning captured pupils' imagination and ensured good progress in their understanding of warm and cold colours, seasonal changes and the theme of time incorporating science, art and design and information and communication technology.

The school's work to promote equality is good. Personalised programmes are effectively devised for pupils that need them. For example, reading recovery sessions and better reading partners are highly successful in accelerating the rate of pupils' progress. As a result, pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals are making significantly faster progress than their peers nationally.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Stephens Roman Catholic Primary School Aided,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE12 8NU**

Thank you to you all for making the inspectors so welcome when we came to your school. Special thanks must go to those of you who gave up time to talk with us about your work and how you enjoy school. You told us about many things that you thought were good, and we agree with you.

Yours is a good school. The headteacher, staff and the governing body have worked hard to make things better for you and it is proving successful. Teaching is good and we saw how much you enjoy your lessons. So it is no wonder that all of you, including the youngest children, are making good progress. You behave well and you try really hard to get along with each other.

The school is very keen to continue to improve so we have made some suggestions to help with this. Occasionally in lessons you could make even faster progress. We have asked that the teaching you receive continues to improve and that staff check carefully what you already know, including when they mark your work. They will then be able to use this information to always make sure the work you are given to do is exactly what you need to help you to take your next step in learning.

I hope that you will all help by continuing to improve your attendance and doing your very best in all you do.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Buller
Lead inspector

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