

# St Charles' RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108496
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle Upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	377767
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Margaret Shepherd

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Mitchell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vicky Lindsay
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Regent Farm Road Gosforth Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 3HE
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Margaret Shepherd  
Gordon Potter

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight lessons, taught by eight teachers. A further 12 short observations of class teachers were conducted, as well as all of the teaching of groups learning letter and word recognition for reading. Discussions were held with parents and carers, children, governors and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised documents relating to self-evaluation, safeguarding, children's capabilities when they join the school, tracking information and teachers' planning and assessment. They looked at pupils' work carried out since September. Inspectors analysed 119 parental questionnaires. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There is a lower than average proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and fewer pupils with a statement of special educational needs than usual. The school has the Enhanced Healthy Schools award. At the time of the inspection all of the senior and middle leaders' roles had been reallocated at the beginning of the academic year. The Reception teacher had only been in the school for a short time before the inspection. The school meets the current floor standards.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school and a cohesive learning community. Achievement in reading is particularly good. School leaders and governors evaluate strengths and weaknesses well and initiate improvements successfully. The school is not outstanding because while teaching is good there are some satisfactory features which prevent it being outstanding overall.
- Pupils make good progress over time. The great majority reach expected levels by the end of Year 6 and a larger proportion than usual reach the higher level. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make equally good progress as their classmates. Children make a very good start in the Reception class and progress very well across all the areas of learning.
- The teaching of reading is a strength. The organisation to support younger learners to gain skills of recognising letters and words is very effective. Teachers work closely with the teaching assistants who are knowledgeable and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. There are some highly effective systems for pupils to check how well they are learning in English. The teaching in Reception is consistently good. These staff work very well together and provide a stimulating and carefully organised curriculum.
- Pupils are considerate and courteous to each other and to adults. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They enjoy taking responsibility. Attendance levels are higher than average.
- Leadership of teaching is good. More experienced leaders effectively evaluate and develop teaching. More recent leadership appointments are in the process of acquiring their skills of evaluation and support. Performance management of teachers has the appropriate focus on tracking pupils' progress. Leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to providing an education that is embodied within the Catholic faith.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the consistency in the quality of teaching by:-
  - providing a demanding pace and high-quality questioning throughout lessons with lively and interesting tasks and topics that foster pupils' enthusiasm
  - challenging more able pupils both in whole class sessions and in group work and checking on their learning more effectively during lessons
  - extending across the whole school and into mathematics the very effective use of success criteria in English established in some classes
  - developing the monitoring, evaluation and support skills of recently appointed leaders through appropriate professional development.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

The majority of learning observed during the inspection was good. Pupils are keen to develop their skills. In the best lessons they make very good progress in activities such as analysing new styles of texts. Pupils' work shows that they master the skills of producing well-balanced extended pieces of writing, especially through carefully focused projects like the Second World War. Younger pupils make good progress when they are in their daily small groups to build on their letter and word recognition for reading. They relish the chance to tackle new letter sounds and celebrate when they do well in remembering previous learning. By the time pupils reach the oldest class they have developed efficient skills in computer word processing. For example, they produced attractively presented leaflets for a targeted audience in a very short time span.

Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average and high in reading. Attainment in reading builds on the above average standards at the end of Year 2. Progress is good through the school. It is better in English than mathematics due to the school's successful emphasis on raising attainment in both reading and writing. Some satisfactory progress was seen when the teaching was not as demanding. Whilst more able pupils make good progress over time, it is not consistent throughout the school. Some of these pupils find the work too easy whether working in whole class sessions or groups. A small proportion of parents' comments raised this issue. The great majority believe that their children make good progress.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well when they are working in classrooms alongside their peers or when they work on their own or in small groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also benefit from good additional support from staff and gain confidence in participating in group sessions. Pupils respond well to the intervention strategies organised by the school to increase their progress. The school works hard and successfully to narrow the gap in attainment between average and below average pupils.

Reception children learn consistently well, whether in the indoor or outdoor environment. They respond very well to adults in small groups or whole class sessions and develop good skills in beginning to write and listen to stories. They tackle opportunities for independent learning with relish. They extend their understanding of the world through a wealth of opportunities for investigations. For example, they made a wide range of hypotheses about whether their vehicles would float in the water channels and were delighted to observe the impact of opening a sluice gate to let the water out.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teachers provide an effective balance between whole class sessions and group work. They provide challenging tasks to match the needs of lower ability and average pupils, ensuring they make good progress. This is not always the case for higher ability pupils and the quality of their learning in lessons is not always checked closely. In the best lessons there is a fast pace to teaching, both in whole class sessions and in group work. These teachers match their questioning skilfully to different pupils' needs. These strengths are not consistently embedded in a minority of lessons. There is some good organisation of lessons where pupils have a very clear understanding of the expectations for the session. For example, in a guided reading session the different groups needed very little support in understanding their tasks and settled very quickly to produce a good volume of work.

Most teachers identify the expected learning at the beginning of the lesson using key criteria. There are examples in English lessons where these criteria drive the learning through the lesson extremely well and are used skilfully to set targets for individuals which are linked closely to marking. As a result, pupils are extremely confident in understanding what to do to improve their work. These strategies accelerate pupils learning very effectively but are not used in all lessons and are not of such high quality in mathematics. Overall, good curriculum planning ensures that there are stimulating and relevant tasks for pupils that build effectively on their previous learning. Some weaker planning of a minority of lessons leads to tasks that are rather mundane and do not engage pupils' interests as effectively.

Reception staff have thorough systems in place to assess individuals' progress both in adult-led and independent activities. These assessments are used effectively to ensure that future planning takes consideration of children's prior learning. Reception staff use questioning skilfully to extend children's thinking and to encourage them to take the next step in understanding their task or in developing a skill. They combine learning across the different areas of learning very effectively within one activity. For example, children developed numeracy, physical and personal skills when they were encouraged to take turns to throw rockets on to numbered targets.

Teachers plan pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development carefully. They use religious education lessons and personal and social education lessons well to extend pupils' learning in these areas. For example, pupils considered the wonder of creation because of the teacher's good-quality powerpoint presentation and sensitive questioning. The great majority of parents agree that teaching is good.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school. They cooperate well with each other in group work or with their talking partners. They have a strong work ethic and expect to settle down quickly to their learning. Their movement around the school is very sensible and they use the outdoor space well during playtimes. Older pupils are very articulate about personal issues such as friendship and the impact that their actions have on others. Reception children's behaviour is very good. They cooperate readily with each other, sharing resources and responding promptly to staff's suggestions and requests.

The school council members are proud of their work in producing the anti-bullying policy in pupil-friendly language. Pupils say that there is very little bullying and that the school handles it quickly. The older pupils have a very good understanding of the different types of bullying, including race, religious, gender or disability. They value the opportunities they have received over time to extend their understanding of these issues.

Pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves safe and say that they feel safe in school. They agree that behaviour is good in the school and in lessons, which concurs with the views of the great majority of parents.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and experienced leaders combine well to drive improvements through well-focused professional development which has a positive impact on pupils' progress. For example, several initiatives were put in place to improve provision in reading resulting in progress accelerating and attainment increasing. The management of changes in staff is carefully considered and transition arrangements handled well. The new Reception teacher settled into the school very quickly due to the informed way support staff explained systems and through time spent with her predecessor to learn about policies and procedures. There is a wide range of data to track pupils' progress through the year but not all leaders use it efficiently. Some of the leaders are skilful at monitoring provision and supporting staff, but others who have recently taken up a leadership role have yet to develop these skills.

Governors are well-informed and knowledgeable about educational developments and how they apply to their own school. There is a strong emphasis on communicating key decisions carefully within the whole school staff. Together with the leaders' systematic evaluation of the school's continuing needs, this gives a good capacity for future improvement. Leaders work effectively to promote equal opportunities and tackle potential discrimination and use any minor incidences in school to emphasise positive values. Safeguarding is robustly applied across the school provision.

The broad and balanced curriculum provides some interesting topics that deliver an enthralling range of subjects, such as Charlie's Adventure where beautifully published books were produced as a result of the international Comenius project. The school is working to extend the use of these challenging topics across the full curriculum but they are not fully embedded. There are some very effective opportunities for the

development of writing across other subjects, although there are not as many for the application of mathematics. Opportunities for enrichment in the curriculum are very good and include a range of sporting and musical activities. The positive aspects of the curriculum promote the good quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.



## 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](http://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.**



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Charles' RC Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne,  
NE3 3HE**

My colleague and I would like to thank you very much for giving us such a warm welcome when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and listening to your views. You helped us to understand what you think about your school. We would like to tell you what we found out.

You go to a good school. You make good progress as you move through the school and by the time you leave in Year 6 your attainment is above average. You learn particularly well in reading. We thought that the time that the younger pupils spend in learning about different letter sounds and words each morning contributed very well to your reading skills. Your behaviour is good. We were impressed with how quickly you settle down to work. You move around the school very sensibly and play well together in the outdoor areas. You told us that you feel that bullying is tackled quickly and that you feel safe in school and we agree. You make a very good start in Reception and children in this class work very well together both indoors and outdoors.

Your leaders work well together to help make your school a better place. There have been lots of changes in these leaders' responsibilities this year and we have asked your school to help them to work hard to develop their management skills. Teaching is good and we were very impressed with how a few of your teachers use success criteria in English to help you to understand how well you are learning. We have asked your school to make sure this happens right through the school as well as in mathematics. We have also asked some of your teachers to make the work for some of you more challenging as some of you find it too easy. Some teachers are going to make sure that the learning in your lessons is faster and to make sure all your activities are really interesting. You can do your best to work even harder in lessons. We wish you great success in your future learning.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Shepherd  
Lead Inspector



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