

St Alphonsus' RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111715
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	356967
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Gill Gleghorn

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	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eileen Summerhill
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Paul
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 11 lessons taught by eight teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including policies, monitoring records, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress and the school's child protection procedures. The inspection team received and analysed 65 questionnaires from parents and carers, which represents 24% of pupils, as well as a number of questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of teaching in each year group and how it contributes to learning.
- The robustness of assessment and tracking in tackling underachievement and improving progress.
- The effectiveness of monitoring by all leaders, including governors, in improving outcomes for pupils.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to promote attendance.

Information about the school

This is an average size primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small minority from various other ethnic groups. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. High levels of mobility are evident in some year groups. Since the last inspection there has been a change in leadership, of both headteacher and deputy headteacher.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It is showing signs of improvement and has good features in the care it provides for its pupils. Parents and carers agree. One commented, 'I feel that staff work hard to make the children feel safe and comfortable. It is like a home from home.' Pupils are happy; they get on well with each other and feel confident that if they have any worries adults will help them. Children make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are well motivated by the good teaching.

Pupils enjoy school and want to achieve well because of the good relationships they have with their teachers. Behaviour is good and pupils have a positive attitude to learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress and given their generally below expected starting points on entry to school, achievement is satisfactory for all. They make better progress in mathematics than in English. Pupils' progress varies between classes reflecting the quality of teaching which, though often good, varies between classes and so is satisfactory overall. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average although attainment in writing remains below that of reading and mathematics. Teachers' use of assessment is improving but there are some inconsistencies in how well individual needs are met and this can slow the rate of progress. Pupils receive appropriate guidance on how to improve their work but do not always have sufficient opportunities to act on this.

Pupils benefit from the good level of care and support. While the curriculum is satisfactory overall, it is good at developing personal skills and knowledge of how to keep safe and healthy. Pupils are also able to access a range of opportunities that widen their understanding of their immediate community. Pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity within the United Kingdom and other countries is less well developed. There are too few opportunities, within the curriculum, for pupils to practise their writing skills on extended tasks. Pupils eagerly volunteer to take on responsibilities and are proud of their contribution to improving their school.

The vision of the leadership is driving improvement. Self-evaluation is mainly accurate and the school knows what it needs to do next. Monitoring systems, however, are not yet rigorous enough in evaluating pupils' progress or in monitoring the impact of teaching and learning on raising attainment and improving progress. There has been satisfactory and sometimes good progress against actions identified since the last inspection. This, coupled with a now more stable staff and governing body, gives the school a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and increase the rate of progress in writing by:

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- using assessment information effectively to ensure teachers match work closely to pupils needs
- providing more opportunities for extended writing
- providing opportunities for pupils to act upon teachers' guidance so they know how to improve their work.
- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation in order to quicken the pace of improvement by:
 - improving the rigour of monitoring of teaching and learning so that all teachers work to a good or better standard
 - ensuring that the performance of all pupils is systematically tracked, so that when progress slows, it can be rectified.
- Provide opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of the diversity of cultures within the United Kingdom and the wider world.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy learning and respond well in lessons. They are keen to do well and have good attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good owing to the good relationships they have with their teachers. Pupils listen intently and readily take on the challenges that teachers provide. They concentrate hard when motivated and work equally well in groups or on their own. This was particularly evident in a lesson where pupils were following instructions to make jam sandwiches. Pupils were highly motivated and enthusiastic and made good progress in developing their understanding of 'bossy verbs' and time connectives. From their average starting points on entry to Year 1 pupils' progress is satisfactory because teaching is inconsistent. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average with attainment in mathematics higher than in English. Pupils' writing is often well-presented but lacks depth and interest because pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length or for varied reasons. Current assessment data indicates that recent actions taken by the school to improve writing are having an effect in some classes, but not all. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as recently introduced initiatives for their support have yet to take full effect.

Pupils are well aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise. This is reflected in their keen involvement in the extra sporting activities provided. They care for each other well, have respect for each other and for adults in the school and say they feel safe. Pupils willingly take on roles as monitors and school council members. There are strong links in the local area through a range of charities and activities with the church. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is a strength of the school, especially their spiritual development where pupils show maturity and sensitivity. Their understanding of the make-up of society in the United Kingdom and of life in other parts of the world is less well developed. Pupils' good social skills, together with their average basic skills and attendance, equip them satisfactorily for future life.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Although some teaching is good, the quality varies from class to class. As a result it is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers use assessment skilfully to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs, pupils are challenged and the pace of learning is good. These lessons are lively and have a clear sense of purpose as pupils know what is required of them and they respond eagerly. This was observed in an English lesson where pupils enjoyed the challenge of exploring the dramatic effects in the text of a story about Robin Hood. At times though, teachers underestimate what pupils can do and the level of tasks set is too low and does not take into account pupils' different needs and abilities. As a result, the pace of learning slows and progress is satisfactory. Marking gives praise and identifies pupils' successes and areas for improvement in their work. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to act on the guidance provided. As a result, they are not involved in improving their work. Teaching assistants are skilled in ensuring pupils with special needs and/or learning difficulties are fully included in lessons.

Strengths in the curriculum lie in the promotion of pupils' personal development through a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities such as volleyball, choir and Japanese drumming. Through the recently introduced curriculum the school is linking subjects together so as to enliven and enrich pupils' learning. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write independently and for extended periods. Pupils with

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special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported through well planned intervention programmes and additional classroom support.

Staff have detailed knowledge about individual pupils so that they are well cared for and develop self-esteem, respect and a sense of responsibility. A key feature is the sensitive care for pupils with a range of complex social and emotional needs. The school works closely with families to support these pupils and this helps the school to achieve attendance which is in line with the national average. Good links with the local secondary school helps pupils to feel confident about the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision and is committed to raising standards and improving provision for all pupils. Working closely with the deputy headteacher, she has introduced initiatives that have led to rising attainment and better progress. These are in the early stages of development or have been curtailed due to staff absences and have not had time to have a full impact on achievement. There are effective systems in place for tracking pupils' progress although such information is not as yet well used by all staff to plan work which is challenging and meets the needs of pupils. Staffing difficulties have conspired to take the senior management team away from monitoring at times. As a result, checks on the quality of teaching have not been sufficiently rigorous or regular enough to identify areas for improvement to ensure consistently good teaching. Although the school has a marking policy, this also has not been rigorously monitored.

Changes to the governing body have resulted in a large majority of governors being fairly new to the role. They have acted swiftly to participate in school initiatives, attend training and know what the school needs to do to improve. They take their duties seriously and are supporting the school through a period of staffing changes. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Governors and staff are suitably trained and vetted.

The promotion of equal opportunities and the tackling of discrimination are satisfactory. The school is aware of the need to evaluate the performance of all groups of pupils more closely to be absolutely sure that no group is underperforming.

The school is proud of its inclusive nature and makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. The sense of community in the school is strong and there are good links with the local community. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their understanding of life in other countries and of Britain as a diverse, multi-cultural society.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

There are many positive features within this caring, calm and safe environment and as a result of this children make good progress in all areas of learning, from starting points which are below those expected for their age. The good role models mean the children behave well, are happy and show consideration and concern for each other. Children who are vulnerable and those with special needs and/or disabilities are identified early and this in conjunction with the small teaching groups ensures that their needs are well met. By the time they enter Year 1 attainment is typically average, although girls perform less well than boys in writing. Children actively engage in an interesting range of activities which are well planned and encourage independent choices through learning experiences which motivate them to explore. For example, the provision of ice and snow in the water area enabled children to see first-hand the effects of melting through temperature change.

Leadership is good and adults learning in partnership have a clear understanding for future improvements. Safeguarding is given a high priority and all systems such as those for tracking and monitoring progress are well thought out and actioned. There are good procedures to monitor and record children's progress and highly focused assessments of recorded observations of child initiated activities helps to effectively guide planning to the next stages in development. Adults are particularly adept at intervening at just the right time to move children's learning forward. Communication with parents and carers is successful and they are given good information to help them support their children's learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents and carers returned the questionnaires to express their views of the school. Almost all parents and carers who returned a questionnaire support the work of the school and the way it helps pupils to feel safe, meets their child's needs and helps them to make progress in their learning. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about how much their child enjoys school, how the school helps their child adopt a healthy lifestyle and how the school helps them to support their child at home. The inspection looked closely at these areas through talking to pupils and adults and found no evidence to support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Alphonsus' RC Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 245 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	49	26	40	6	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	69	18	28	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	43	36	55	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	37	40	62	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	45	36	55	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	35	37	57	5	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	42	32	49	6	9	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	25	38	33	51	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	26	45	69	2	3	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	29	40	62	4	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	18	44	68	2	3	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	37	32	49	4	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	45	25	38	9	14	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



10 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Alphonsus' RC Primary School, Middlesbrough, TS3 6PX

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave me and my colleagues when we came to inspect your school and for the part you played in the inspection. You were polite and helpful throughout our time in school.

Your school is satisfactory and showing signs of improvement. Adults care for you well and your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. You told us that you feel safe and enjoy school, particularly the sports clubs and activities provided. Teaching is satisfactory, as is your progress. This year there have been improvements which we would like to see more of across the school.

We have asked your teachers to help improve your work by:

- making sure that you have more opportunities to write
- making sure all of you make the best possible progress across the year through more frequent monitoring of your work
- ensuring your progress is matched to the best teaching your school can provide.

I have also asked that you have the opportunity to learn about other people's lives, in our own country and in other parts of the world.

You can help by carrying on being the delightful children you are, making sure you continue to attend regularly and always doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Gill Gleghorn

Lead inspector

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