

# St Mary Magdalen's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Seaham

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114236
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	357501
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kate Pringle

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>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	197
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr Tom Burke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Kevin Rhodes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Dene House Road Seaham County Durham SR7 7BJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5813055
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	seaham.stmary.magdalens.rc@durhamlea.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Teaching and learning were observed in 10 lessons and eight teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, assessment information, policies and procedures, school development plans and updates of pupils' progress. Views of stakeholders were also considered through questionnaire responses from 78 parents and carers, 10 staff and 100 pupils.

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

- How effectively provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides opportunities for good progress and attainment for children.
- How effectively teaching challenges the learning needs of differing abilities to make good progress, in particular for boys and in writing at Key Stage 1 and for girls and in mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- How well links with parents and carers and with other partners support the care, guidance and support of pupils.
- How effectively the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers are developing in order to assure challenge and improved outcomes for pupils.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average-size school where the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups and presently no pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who have a statement of special need is well below the national average. The school has achieved Healthy School status. After a period of instability a new headteacher was appointed in September 2009 and a deputy headteacher in September 2010.

**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 has a welcoming ethos and provides a positive climate in which pupils play and learn harmoniously. Relationships with parents and carers are developing and most feel that the school supports their children well and keeps them safe. Overall outcomes for pupils are satisfactory. The strengths of the school are reflected in the personal development of pupils who say that they enjoy school and feel safe. They know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and understand the concept of action and consequence. This has impacted positively upon the quality of the behaviour which is now good. Pupils reflect well upon the needs of others including those from other cultures and backgrounds.

Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress. They enter school with skills expected for their age and leave Year 6 with standards attainment in line with those nationally. Recent initiatives to develop teachers' practice are raising the quality of teaching and learning and this is beginning to accelerate the progress pupils make. However, their progress varies between classes and between subjects. This is reflected in lower attainment in writing and mathematics, due to the lack of consistency in the use of assessment information. Although procedures for assessment and tracking of pupils' learning are in place they are at an early stage of implementation. While teaching is satisfactory generally, not all teachers use this information effectively on a daily basis to challenge pupils, especially for those of higher ability. The curriculum matches most pupils' needs. It does not yet provide enough opportunities to be creative and investigate using emerging skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) to best effect in different subjects.

The headteacher and the newly appointed deputy have worked successfully to build confidence and self-esteem within the school after a period of instability. Professional development is improving the understanding of the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers. Self-evaluation and monitoring by middle leaders and by managers of their areas of responsibility is just getting under way. Overall, the pace of implementation is not as fast as it might be because responsibilities are not delegated enough and improvement is largely in the hands of senior leaders. Consequently, middle leaders have had limited impact as yet in improving pupils' outcomes. Self-evaluation by senior leaders is accurate and is used to identify priority areas and demonstrates recent successes. Improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and better tracking of the progress pupils make have contributed to better provision generally and are contributing to improved pupils' outcomes. Pupils' behaviour is also improved and is now good. Overall, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 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.

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

- Raise standards of attainment across the school by increasing the pace of progress, especially in writing, mathematics and for pupils of high ability, through:
  - improving the use of assessment data to plan challenging activities that are well-matched to pupils' individual abilities
  - using marking to indicate success clearly against their targets and to provide guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good across the school by:
  - ensuring good pace in lessons and reducing the amount of teacher direction in order to enable more time for pupils to carry out individual tasks
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to work together to investigate and learn using practical and creative opportunities
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills, including the use of ICT, across the curriculum.
- Develop the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders and managers, improving their skills where necessary to:
  - extend and sharpen the quality of monitoring and evaluation
  - use rigorous self-evaluation to identify actions to improve outcomes for pupils
  - ensuring that all understand their accountability to improve provision to raise attainment.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils enjoy school and speak well of the opportunities it offers them. They work hard and seek to please their teachers. Good relationships with teachers and good behaviour contribute to their positive attitudes to learning. Progress is satisfactory overall. Where lessons provide opportunities for practical and creative learning, pupils engage particularly well and progress at a faster rate. In lessons where this is not the case progress slows. For instance, in lessons where teachers talk for too long pupils have fewer opportunities to engage independently. Most children enter Reception at levels expected for their age. Attainment by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is average because of the largely satisfactory progress pupils make throughout the school. Recent improvements to teaching and learning are beginning to contribute to improving standards, particularly in writing in Key Stage 1 and for higher-ability pupils in Year 6. Over the school, the gap between boys and girls is narrowing, particularly in mathematics. The progress of groups of pupils, including boys and girls and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is satisfactory overall.

Pupils speak confidently about feeling safe and how adults help them to resolve concerns. They understand how their actions will have consequences upon themselves and on others. They speak confidently about the improvements to their own behaviour and how this has impacted upon them individually. Pupils understand the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and take every opportunity to engage in physical activities. Many choose to take

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advantage of a school lunch, milk and fruit and they understand what foods should be eaten in moderation. Attendance is average; however, the vast majority of pupils say that they enjoy school and many engage in the opportunities if offers them. Pupils contribute well to the school through their roles as school councillors and buddies. Their contribution to the local community is at an earlier stage of development. Pupils reflect upon their actions as citizens of a wider world. They have a good understanding of different cultures and communities and actively support those in need throughout the world.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Pupils enjoy their lessons and engage well in the activities and experiences provided for them. In lessons where they have opportunities to engage practically through discussion and problem-solving, they engage with great enthusiasm. The quality of pupils' learning varies because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This means that the progress pupils make is also inconsistent. In better lessons there is good pace and high expectations of pupils. Teachers match activities well to individual needs and pupils have time to consider, practise and consolidate learning through activities which promote independence. For example, in one lesson pupils used percentages competently to compare discounted rates of holidays and prices of commodities. Through a variety of strategies they solved the problems and drew conclusions about the best value. Pupils were highly motivated and the pace of progress quickened. In satisfactory lessons,

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progress can slow when teachers dominate the lesson with explanations and provide fewer practical activities to challenge pupils at an individual level. Teachers know the levels pupils are attaining at. However, not all use this information effectively enough to provide tasks which challenge pupils at the appropriate level. The use of marking against individual targets does not yet inform pupils well enough of their success or of what they need to learn next.

The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop their skills. Approaches to cross-curricular learning, to enable pupils to understand the links between subjects, are at an early stage of development. Opportunities to use the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are increasing but are not sufficiently implemented to enable pupils to use these effectively across the curriculum. Additional experiences of visits and visitors to the school help to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world. For example, a growing number of pupils are learning to play musical instruments and a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils recently returned from a trip to France. Additional activities such as sport, dance, and drama are well-attended and further extend pupils' skills outside of the classroom.

Staff understand the individual needs of pupils and pastoral care is good. They provide appropriate care and support especially for those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is particularly true of teaching assistants who support pupils with specific needs. Effective strategies to reduce inappropriate behaviour have been successful in improving relationships and enabling better access to learning. Strategies to promote good progress are satisfactory because there are inconsistencies in guidance through marking and the use of assessment data to set appropriate work. Links with outside agencies are well-established.

Communication with parents and carers is developing and this is having a positive impact upon relationships generally. However, the level of support that parents can give their children is not as great as it could be because they are not yet fully engaged with what, and how, their children learn. Partnerships with other schools and providers are effective. Induction into school and the transfer to secondary school are well provided for and this means that children and pupils transfer between different stages in learning with confidence.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has worked effectively with the new deputy headteacher to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There is an increased level of staff professional

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development. This has created a better awareness of pupils' needs and contributed to the drive towards improvement and higher levels of attainment. Delegation of responsibilities to middle leaders is recent and their work to monitor and evaluate rigorously, to take action and impact upon outcomes for pupils, is at an early stage. Accountability is not yet established or fully understood. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders means that there is a good understanding of where further support is needed in order to ensure that all pupils make at least good progress.

The governing body provides support for the school and ensures that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. It does not yet provide sufficient challenge on the school's performance and responses to parental concerns are not timely enough. Although links and communication with parents and carers are improving, the school is not responding to their concerns as quickly as it might do. Strategies to better include parents and carers in their children's learning and regularly share the progress their children are making are not yet regular or detailed enough. Equal opportunities are promoted satisfactorily. As a result, all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and make satisfactory progress; there are few instances of bullying or of racism and the school can demonstrate some improving standards. Overall the school provides satisfactory value for money. Actions to develop links with cultures and communities outside of the local area are developing but the school does not yet evaluate and plan developments in this aspect in sufficient detail.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle confidently into this warm environment where they are encouraged to learn simple rules of how to keep safe and healthy. Children learn to take turns and share as they interact with adults and other children. Behaviour is good. Most children enter with



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skills appropriate for their age. Satisfactory progress means that children enter Year 1 at levels in line with others nationally. Children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early. Focused intervention and support mean that their needs are met effectively and they progress in line with other children.

The range of activities for children is developing. Most recently the provision of a covered outside learning space is enabling better access to wider opportunities. Adults know the children well. They make accurate assessments of their attainment and the progress they make. However, this information is not being used to providing enough challenge at individual level, especially for those of higher ability. The recent introduction of 'learning journeys' is providing a record of the progress children make. But, not enough use is made of children's successes to inform the next stages of learning for individual levels of ability. Leaders understand the needs of the setting and are working towards providing greater opportunities for children to develop independent learning skills through practical and creative activities. Links with parents and carers are established and opportunities for them to engage with their children's learning are satisfactory and developing further.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most of them were positive about the school. They appreciate the care given to their children and are confident that their children are happy and safe and that teachers meet their children's needs. Some issues were raised by parents and carers, largely concerning the progress their children were making and how well-informed they were of that progress. The level of communication was also highlighted with regard to the level of response by the school in answer to issues raised by parents and carers. Other issues identified showed no particular pattern. All issues were fully investigated by inspectors and their findings contribute to the evidence base used to arrive at the inspection judgements.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary Magdalen's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Seaham 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 78 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 197 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	54	32	41	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	64	26	33	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	40	35	45	9	12	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	49	28	36	7	9	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	38	49	32	41	5	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	44	35	45	6	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	44	39	50	4	5	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)	28	36	36	46	6	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	42	38	49	5	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	38	37	47	7	9	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	33	38	49	7	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	47	32	41	5	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	60	23	29	5	6	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and 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 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



9 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Mary Magdalen's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Seaham, Seaham, SR7 7BJ**

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. It was lovely to talk to you and thank you to those of you who filled in the questionnaires. They helped us to understand how you feel about your school and those who help you.

We feel that your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education and that you make satisfactory progress in your learning. Because adults look after you, you feel safe and confident. We know that you enjoy coming to school and enjoy the opportunities to learn. To help your school become even better we have asked the school to improve a few things so that you can learn even more.

We want your teachers to help you achieve higher standards by making sure that the tasks they give you challenge you to progress faster. We want their marking to help you by telling you what you do well and what you need to learn next. Because we saw you really enjoy lessons where you investigate and are creative, we'd like to see more lessons like this. We would also like teachers to provide more opportunities for you to use your skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT in other subjects. Some school leaders and managers need to become better at their roles of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. This will make sure that you get the best teaching and learning so that you can achieve really well. Finally, we would like to see better links with your parents and carers and provide more opportunities for them to understand how well you are doing in school and how to work with you to help you do better.

Yours sincerely

Kate Pringle

Lead Inspector

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