

# St Godric's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Thornley

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114277
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	363817
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Linda Buller

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>	98
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Stephen Carter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jane Lewin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Thornley Road Wheatley Hill Durham DH6 3NR
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed seven lessons and four teachers. They held discussions with staff, pupils and governors. Inspectors scrutinised the school's own analysis of pupils' attainment and progress. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning and evaluation documents, as well as questionnaires completed by pupils and staff. A total of 50 questionnaires completed by parents and carers were received and analysed.

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

- Whether the impact of curriculum provision, self-evaluated as outstanding, is evident in the progress made by all groups of pupils in reading and mathematics.
- The outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to determine whether the overall effectiveness of the schools work in this area is outstanding.
- The success of leaders and managers in bringing about exceptional improvement in order to determine whether the schools capacity to improve is outstanding.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Levels of pupil mobility are high with as many as 55% of pupils in some cohorts entering the school during Key Stage 2, often as late as Year 6. There have been a number of changes to staffing since the last inspection. In September 2006 the school entered a federation with another small local primary school in a nearby village. The headteacher is responsible for leading and managing both schools. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Standard, Artsmark Gold, and Activemark. An after school Sure Start childcare company shares the school premises. This provision is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

St Godric's is an outstanding school. The school community successfully strives to provide a safe and incredibly supportive environment where pupils develop outstanding personal attributes and achieve well academically. Highly memorable experiences are provided for pupils through an outstandingly vibrant curriculum and real life experiences which make learning exciting and enjoyable. Children make a flying start in the Reception class where outstanding provision opens a world of learning for them. The school's excellent care, guidance and support systems are firmly based on knowing the pupils and their families very well and on the school's Christian values. The school is outstanding in the way it ensures that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed by speedily identifying the individual need of each pupil. The development of outstanding partnerships with other agencies and within the federation contributes strongly to the high quality support and guidance provided, which helps to remove any barriers to learning. As a result, although pupil attainment remains average overall due to high levels of mobility, there are striking examples of outstanding progress for individual pupils, particularly in reading and for those whose circumstances makes them most vulnerable.

Teaching that is good, and has some outstanding elements, enables pupils to achieve well whatever their starting points. Effective questioning which promotes pupils' thinking skills is a strong feature of effective learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are outstanding. Staff have high expectations of pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour and to work independently, in pairs or in groups. Consequently, pupils' outstanding behaviour contributes to their good learning in the classroom, as well as to their excellent social and moral development. Occasionally, teachers' explanations of tasks are too long and their expectations of pupils' work are not high enough. At these times the pace of learning slows. This is one of the reasons why pupils' progress in mathematics is not yet as strong as that seen in pupils' reading and writing skills.

Led by the highly experienced headteacher, self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. A tangible sense of trust exists throughout the whole school community. Excellent tracking procedures help leaders and managers to hold staff fully to account and ensure that, as far as possible, all individuals and groups progress at similar rates. High levels of commitment, drive and ambition for improvement, are evident in leaders at all levels. The successful actions taken by leaders at all levels to bring about improvement in, for example, the curriculum and the outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage further demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics from good to outstanding by:

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- maintaining the pace of learning throughout all lessons
- having consistently high expectations of the levels of work which pupils are capable of completing
- providing pupils with opportunities to investigate and find solutions for themselves
- consistently using assessment information to pin-point precisely what it is that pupils need to learn next.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons and are extremely keen to learn. This plays a significant part in their good achievement. They listen with rapt attention to teachers' explanations. Their faces shine with pride and wonder when they, for example, recognise the relationship between numbers which helps them to solve problems or when using new language to describe story settings. For older pupils, opportunities to debate, in their writing, topical issues relevant to their interests, such as the use of mobile phones or which football club should have ownership of the new Olympic stadium, are extremely successful in promoting writing skills. As a result those pupils in the current Year 6 who entered the school in Reception and stayed through to Year 6, have made outstanding progress in English, particularly in reading. Attainment in mathematics is broadly average; this represents good progress from pupils' starting points, which are generally below average in most areas of learning on entry to Year 1. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities respond extremely well to support which is carefully tailored to their specific needs and achieve in line with their peers.

Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. In discussion they demonstrate an exceptionally well-developed understanding of issues which may affect their safety both in school and out. They maturely explain how they can limit any risks by taking responsibility for their own behaviour, for example, by following school rules. Their confidence, self-reliance and understanding of the needs of others are exceptional. They readily accept responsibility and show leadership, for example, in their enthusiasm for the school's environmental measures. Pupils are rightly proud of the money they raise for a wide range of local, national and international charities and the support they provide to their partner school in Kenya. They show an excellent understanding of health-related issues. For example, Year 2 pupils are able to explain the benefits of the calcium gained from drinking milk on the development of bones and teeth. They give a detailed explanation of the impact of exercise, while clapping to demonstrate the increase in heart rate and why this is important in circulating blood around the body. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness is excellent. They are reflective and take great delight in exploring the world around them. They fully appreciate and follow the school's behaviour code and are skilled at solving moral dilemmas. Their knowledge of sustainability issues such as energy conservation is very well developed and closely aligned to their desire to play their part in improving the world in which they live.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

Teaching is lively and imaginative. It is carefully planned to bring learning to life for pupils through practical activities. In those lessons where teaching is outstanding, assessment information is used to excellent effect. Not only are tasks carefully planned to take into account pupils' prior learning but high quality questioning is used throughout lessons to check pupils' understanding and to provide the challenge needed to move them on in their learning at an impressive rate. This outstanding practice is not yet consistent in all lessons. Occasionally, teachers spend too much time in the giving of explanations and do not allow pupils the opportunity to investigate and find solutions for themselves. This is particularly evident in mathematics where some staff are not yet using assessment of pupils' prior attainment well enough to identify precisely what they need to learn next. As a result pupils of all abilities spend too long consolidating learning rather than tackling the next challenge.

The outstanding curriculum gives pupils a wide range of experiences within and beyond the classroom through exceptionally good planning and highly effective partnerships. Subjects are skilfully woven together to engage and interest pupils. For example, the Key Stage 1 theme of Space encompasses the history and science of space exploration as well as providing an exciting focus for the development of pupils' reading and writing skills. Enrichment through many trips and visits complements the excellent curriculum and

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makes a significant contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development through the broadening of horizons and the raising of aspirations

Parents, carers and pupils are keen to express their appreciation of the high quality care, support and guidance provided by the school. Support is very carefully targeted and specific to individual need and, as a result, all pupils achieve equally well. Pupils arriving at the school partway through the year are supported exceptionally well. They are effectively integrated into the school family and settle quickly into school routines. In partnership with other schools, a parent support advisor has been relentless in working to improve attendance and in supporting families so that every pupil has the chance to succeed.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

All leaders and managers have an exceptionally strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas where they want to develop further. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching throughout the school. Regular monitoring takes place and clear points for improvement are provided. This has led to some examples of outstanding teaching but this is not yet consistent in all classes. The promotion of equality based on Christian values is central to the school's ethos. Leaders track the performance of groups rigorously and take exceptionally decisive action when patterns of underperformance appear. The school operates as a cohesive community where harassment or bullying are not tolerated. The understanding and values needed to help pupils to become respectful and tolerant members of the school community are woven throughout the curriculum and are highly successful. The school is now extending this provision so that pupils' understanding of global diversity can be further strengthened.

Excellent relationships have been established with parents and carers. A number of courses and special events have been introduced to enable parents and carers to work closely with the school and to help their children to succeed. This is one of the factors underpinning the improvement to above average attainment in pupils' reading skills. Partnerships with other schools and external experts enable the school to extend the curriculum beyond that which this small school could alone provide. This is a key feature in pupils' good progress within sport, the arts and their outstanding spiritual, social and cultural development.

Governance is good. Under the federation arrangement, the governing body have a good understanding of the challenges facing the community and are fully involved in the life of the school. Their role in monitoring the work of the school and in holding it to account is improving through the delegation of governors to specific areas of interest but as yet this

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is at an early stage of development. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure. Risk assessments are rigorous and fully implemented. Recommended good practice is followed and staff demonstrate a very good understanding of child protection issues.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved well since the last inspection and is now outstanding. As a result, children in the current Reception class and those who are now in Year 1 have reached above average levels of attainment in most areas of their learning. This represents outstanding progress from their starting points, which are generally below those expected and often well below in some aspects of their communication, language and literacy development. A strength of provision is the interaction between staff and children. Through detailed observation, all staff have an excellent understanding of children's individual abilities. Staff use this information exceptionally well to pose questions and plan activities around children's interests which readily engage them in learning and ignites their imagination. Children are motivated, work well together and successfully share, cooperate and help each other in their learning. For example, children squealed in delight as they successfully worked together to move from one island to another linking letters to form words and reach the treasure chest. Strong leadership and management are demonstrated in an excellent understanding of Early Years education and the high expectations of what all children can achieve. Children are exceptionally well cared for and welfare requirements, including safeguarding are robustly met.



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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Those who did so are highly supportive of the school and most are pleased with their children's experience. Very few of the questionnaires received included any adverse responses. Parents and carers were unanimous in their view that their children enjoy school, are safe and are well cared for. They consider that teaching is good and are happy with the progress their children make. Inspection evidence supports parents' and carers' positive views.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Godric's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Thornley 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 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 98 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	78	11	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	94	3	6	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	36	72	12	24	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	62	16	32	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	40	80	10	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	60	18	36	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	66	17	34	0	0	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)	31	62	17	34	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	64	16	32	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	68	15	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	54	20	40	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	84	6	12	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	78	10	20	0	0	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.**



13 May 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Godric's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School,  
Thornley, Durham, DH6 3NR**

Thank you very much indeed for the warm and friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when they visited your school recently. I found what you had to say very helpful, and I want you to know what we found out about your school. The way you behave and contribute to the school, as well as the exciting opportunities for learning and the care it gives you, help to make your school outstanding. Children get off to a wonderful start in the Reception class and enjoy their days exploring and using their imagination to learn new and wonderful things. You say you feel very safe in school and your understanding of healthy lifestyles is excellent. I was very impressed at how well one of the younger pupils was able to demonstrate how exercise increased her heart beat and how this would help to pump the blood around her body.

You make good progress at school because you receive good teaching. Teachers help you to learn by, for example, giving you chances to write about interesting things you have studied in different subjects, such as history. In some of your lessons you make outstanding progress. I have asked the school to make a few improvements so that this is the case in all of your lessons. I have asked your teachers to always expect you to do as much work as you can and reach the highest standards that you can in every lesson, especially in mathematics. I have also asked that they are very clear in each lesson what it is that you need to learn next and to give you every opportunity to investigate things for yourselves so you can decide your own solutions to problems.

You can play your part in these improvements by continuing to be supportive of one another and as keen as you are now to learn. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector

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