

St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Moor

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114247
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378823
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2012
Lead inspector	Janette Corlett

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Doherty
Headteacher	Joanne Sands
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Janette Corlett

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed four teachers teaching ten lessons or parts of lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made short visits to a number of support sessions, where extra help is provided for pupils by trained assistants, and to the breakfast-club. The inspector talked to groups of pupils in lessons, during breaks and the lunch hour and listened to a sample of pupils reading independently. Discussions were held with two members of the governing body and school staff including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and middle leaders. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents including the school development plan, safeguarding documents together with child protection and anti-bullying policies. Also, the inspector analysed 37 questionnaires from parents and carers and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The majority of pupils is of White British heritage. Lower than average proportions of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and/or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported with School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school exceeds the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because the quality of teaching varies across the school and this means that pupils' progress is not consistently good in all year groups. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average. Progress is most rapid in the Early Years Foundation Stage and upper Key Stage 2. Whilst progress in Key Stage 1 is improving, it is only satisfactory and pupils do not reach high enough standards at the end of Year 2. This means that achievement is satisfactory overall.
- Teaching is satisfactory and improving. Teaching is stronger in reading and writing than it is in mathematics and this explains why progress is less rapid in this subject. In some lessons there is not enough challenge for more-able pupils. As a result, too few pupils reach the highest possible levels of attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. Whilst major disruption to learning is uncommon, occasional low-level disruption in lessons sometimes means that pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- The headteacher and members of the governing body know the school's strengths and areas which require improvement. The systems and structures in place to enable other school leaders to be fully effective in driving forward improvement and to hold teachers to account for their work are in the early stages of development. Whilst it is possible to see some impact from their work, for example, in improving the quality and consistency of teachers' marking, other aspects of their leadership are only just beginning to bear fruit in terms of raising attainment and accelerating progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching until it is consistently good or better throughout the school by:
 - making sure that all pupils make at least expected progress by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, based on their individual starting points
 - eradicating the gap between pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6
 - ensuring that the proportion of more-able pupils reaching the highest possible attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 accurately reflects the proportion of more-able pupils in each cohort.

- Improve behaviour by:
 - ensuring that the school's policy on behaviour is shared with parents, carers and pupils and consistently applied in all year groups so that lessons proceed with no disruption to learning.

- Strengthen the impact of leaders and managers on achievement by:
 - developing a system of shared leadership which effectively supports the headteacher in driving forward improvement
 - holding teachers to account for pupils' progress through robust and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Questionnaire responses show that the vast majority of parents and carers are satisfied that the school effectively supports their children's achievement. Inspection findings are that pupils' achievement is variable as they move through the school. Children enter the school with levels of skills and development which are generally well below those expected for youngsters of similar age. The school's careful arrangements to introduce them to school life and to engage their parents and carers in their learning mean that they swiftly settle into routines and really enjoy school. As a result they make good progress and, by the end of the Reception Year, they reach standards which are only slightly below national expectations. The highly-skilled teacher and support assistants build on the children's own experiences. They maintain a careful balance between those activities which children choose for themselves, and those which are directed by adults so that not a moment of learning time is wasted.

Pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is less rapid because pupils are not always clear on what is expected of them in terms of their work and behaviour. By the end of Year 6, attainment varies due to the relatively small size of individual cohorts, but is broadly in line with the national level in English and slightly below in mathematics. The gap in attainment between the school and pupils nationally at the end of Year 2 has narrowed significantly. Pupils make the most rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 where

they are well-motivated to learn through interesting activities which stimulate their strong engagement in learning. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is used very effectively as a tool for learning and to encourage independent working. For example, in a reading lesson, pupils worked in small groups on a variety of different tasks to develop their skills.

Attainment of more-able pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1, is lower than average because they occasionally spend too much time consolidating prior learning when they are ready to move on and this limits their progress. Disabled pupils and those with a wide range of special educational needs, make satisfactory progress as they move through the school with support from well-qualified teaching assistants. Over time, attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is low, but improving. This is due to focused teaching and support which helps pupils learn the links between letters and sounds and use this knowledge to break down words and pronounce them. By Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading is average and most pupils take real pleasure in reading both at home and in school.

Quality of teaching

Teaching, while satisfactory, is not good consistently enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make good and better progress. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of behaviour and the amount and presentation of work are not high enough. Where this is the case progress slows and the work produced is not of good quality.

The great majority of parents and carers agrees that the school helps pupils to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and make effective use of skilful questioning to engage pupils and extend their thinking. In the best lessons, learning proceeds at a swift pace and pupils are encouraged to work quickly on interesting and engaging tasks. Skilled teaching assistants support small groups of pupils with special educational need or those who may simply need a little extra help with their work. Some teachers provide particularly well for pupils in mixed-age classes with a broad range of abilities. In one mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher taught basic links between percentages and fractions whilst at the same time helping older and more-able pupils to extend their thinking through developing these links into an algebraic formula.

Where teaching is less successful, planning is not based firmly on secure assessment of prior learning. As a result, gaps in understanding are not always identified. Some pupils then move on to more advanced stages without a secure enough foundation in basic skills. This occasionally leads to confusion and inhibits progress, particularly in relation to mathematical calculation skills.

Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and increasingly use the information to plan effectively for the next steps in learning. Older pupils have detailed individual targets for improvement in writing. They are proud to talk about their progress towards these targets and demonstrate examples from their work where they have been successful in achieving them. Teachers' marking usually gives pupils clear direction

on how to improve their work, and they can point to examples of where they have acted on suggestions to correct mistakes or modify future work.

Teachers and support staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by encouraging them to treat each other and adults in the school with respect, to listen to and value one another's viewpoint and to be aware of the potential impact of a thoughtless or unkind word or gesture. Teachers develop this further throughout the wider curriculum by exploring other continents and cultures. Through an Internet link with a school in Venezuela, for example, pupils learn about the language, culture and traditions of people living in South America.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Whilst the vast majority of pupils, parents and carers agree that children feel safe in school, some raised concerns about behaviour. Inspection evidence found that teachers and support staff generally manage behaviour well according to the school's behaviour policy, but there are inconsistencies in this and, as a result, low-level disruption occasionally takes place in lessons and this sometimes inhibits learning. Most pupils have a good understanding of what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and the school works well with a range of outside agencies to support those pupils with behavioural difficulties.

Pupils say that there is no bullying of any kind in school. Occasionally they fall out with one another, but they swiftly sort things out and know that they can turn to adults for help and support if necessary. Pupils are aware of the dangers of cyber-bullying and understand how to protect themselves from this both in and out of school. Attendance is average and most pupils arrive in good time for the start of the school day.

Leadership and management

Strong direction from the headteacher has resulted in an improving picture of achievement. Other school leaders are in the early stages of developing their roles and are just beginning to show a measurable impact on the school's performance. They do not always have enough time to monitor the quality of teaching in their individual areas of responsibility and this sometimes limits their effectiveness in driving improvement. Systems to track pupils' progress and hold teachers to account for pupils' performance are becoming more rigorous. This means that any pupils in danger of falling behind in their work are swiftly identified. Focused professional development opportunities and robust systems for the performance management of teachers are already improving the quality of teaching across the school and indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The impact of the curriculum on outcomes for pupils is satisfactory. Recent changes to allow more time for individual and guided reading sessions and to develop links between subjects are helping to raise attainment and increase pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Similarly a range of interesting visits and visitors to the school provide a stimulating focus for each new topic area. Last summer, for example, the whole school visited Beamish Museum to explore history in the locality and gain some insights into life in Victorian times. Pupils and their parents and carers appreciate the

range of after-school clubs and the daily provision of a breakfast-club to support working families. Annual residential visits for pupils in Key Stage 2 enrich the curriculum and also support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Members of the governing body are well-informed, supportive and increasingly active within the school. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The school is proactive in promoting racial harmony. Pupils are very clear that racism is totally unacceptable and school behaviour logs over time show no racist incidents.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

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

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



26 April 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School,
South Moor, Stanley, DH9 6PH**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I so enjoyed talking to you and observing some of your lessons. You told me that most of you enjoy coming to school where you feel safe as you play and learn together. I was particularly impressed with the way you use computers to help you learn and would like to say a special 'thank you' to the Class 4 pupils who showed me some of the programs you use to support your reading skills.

I judged that your school is satisfactory and improving. Your headteacher, all the staff and members of the governing body are helping you to improve the progress you make. You reach broadly average standards by the time you leave the school. I have asked them to help you to make even faster progress in mathematics and, for those of you in Years 1 and 2, also in reading and writing, by making sure that the teaching in all your lessons is good or even better. I have also asked them to make sure that you all understand exactly what is expected of you in terms of behaviour. Most of you behave well, but there are a few of you who occasionally let yourselves down. Some of your parents and carers are concerned that this might mean you are not always learning as much as you can in lessons or are perhaps disturbing your friends. Additionally, I have asked school leaders to help your headteacher more to check on the quality of your learning and progress and make sure each one of you is doing as well as you possibly can.

You can help too by always behaving sensibly, listening to the advice your teachers give you and working hard together in your school family.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janette Corlett
Lead Inspector

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