

St Francis Church of England Aided Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114267
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	395547
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2012
Lead inspector	Lesley Clark

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bowes
Headteacher	Jane Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2008
School address	Scholars Path Newton Aycliffe DL5 7HB
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Introduction

Inspection team

Lesley Clark

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 12 lessons taught by four teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and four groups of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6, representing a quarter of the school. The inspector observed the school's work, heard a third of pupils read and looked at a range of documentation including assessments of pupils' progress; the school's monitoring of teaching and learning and documentation relating to attendance and safeguarding. She analysed questionnaires returned from staff and pupils and 34 questionnaires from parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A larger than average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils supported at School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school meets the current floor standard, which are the minimum standards for attainment and progress expected by the government.

Most staff, including the headteacher, were appointed within the last two years. The school has a breakfast-club. The school holds several awards including the Young Enterprise award, the Arts Mark Silver, the Active Mark and the Quality Mark. It has achieved Healthy School status.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because more-able pupils do not read as well as they should and teachers' roles as subject co-ordinators are underdeveloped. The school has some outstanding features. Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics because it is taught extremely well. Their behaviour and safety-awareness are outstanding and make a significant contribution to their learning.
- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points. They achieve well to reach standards that are above average in English and significantly above average in mathematics by the end of Year 6. Pupils write well. However, more-able pupils do not read as fluently or as expressively as they write.
- Pupils are taught well. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and strive to beat their personal targets. Marking is of high quality and so pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work.
- Pupils are exceptionally attentive in lessons and keen to learn. They listen well and work extremely hard. They say, 'Lessons are interesting and fun but still challenge us.' Pupils have many responsibilities around school which they carry out sensibly. The school is an orderly safe environment because pupils behave with considerable maturity.
- The school is led and managed well. A particular strength is the use of assessment to check pupils' progress at regular intervals. Good management of performance and leadership of teaching strengthen teachers' performance, ensuring that pupils make at least good progress in every lesson. Subject co-ordinators have limited input into development planning. The innovative curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and encourages pupils to be met well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the reading skills of more-able pupils by:
 - giving pupils sufficient time to read in a variety of contexts and situations
 - giving pupils opportunities to read to different people so that they learn to read fluently and with expression
 - broadening the range of thought-provoking fiction and non-fiction reading materials, especially for older pupils.

- Develop the role of subject co-ordinators to support school development.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good from starting points that vary from average to above average. Parents and carers say that their children make good progress and inspection findings support these views. By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average overall and significantly so in mathematics.

Attainment in reading is above average by the end of Year 6. Average and lower-attaining pupils read competently and with good understanding. However, more-able pupils do not read as well as they should. They tend to read less fluently and without expression, sometimes disregarding punctuation, because they are unused to reading in a variety of contexts and situations. Younger pupils have a good range of reading materials to stimulate good reading habits but the range of fiction and non-fiction reading materials for older and more-able pupils is more limited. Consequently, more-able pupils do not change their books particularly often or persist with more challenging reading matter.

Attainment in writing is above average by the end of Year 6 and improving rapidly. Pupils write expressively, using paragraphs and a good range of punctuation well. They know, for example, that 'you can swap a connective for a semi-colon.' More-able and average-attaining pupils enjoy making simple sentences more complex by using new words such as 'grief-stricken' or 'looming menacingly.' Younger pupils learn to write rapidly and at length because they hold their pens properly and join their letters correctly.

Attainment in mathematics is significantly above average with 20 per cent of pupils in Year 6 working at the level expected of 14-year-olds. Over half the pupils in Years 5 and 6 currently exceed nationally-expected levels. This is because they know their times tables, have a secure understanding of number bonds and place value and tackle problems methodically. The sense of excitement was tangible when pupils in Year 6 worked out a formula and discovered the huge number of different permutations for 10 objects.

The vast majority of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs reach expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics because they have equally challenging targets as their classmates. They are not afraid to make mistakes because they know they learn from them. Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals perform as well

as other groups. The school can demonstrate that it is successfully closing gaps between the performances of different groups of learners.

Quality of teaching

Parents, carers and pupils agree that teaching is good and inspection findings confirm these views. A key strength across the school is the way teachers use assessments of what pupils know and what they need to learn next to shape lessons. This aids pupils' good and often rapid progress. For example, younger more-able pupils moved swiftly on to solving complex mathematical problems because their secure grasp of column addition meant they could solve simple ones easily. Teachers have high expectations. They expect pupils to sit attentively, set work out neatly and fold their arms when they have finished. They set suitably challenging work for different ability groups. Teaching assistants support these different groups very effectively, mirroring teachers' practice of encouraging pupils to think for themselves. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive the same good-quality class teaching as others. Consequently, they tackle issues such as social responsibility as competently as everyone else, for example when a Year 6 group presented compelling reasons as to who was most to blame for the tragic outcome in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Teachers give pupils ample daily opportunities to write, but fewer opportunities to read. Daily guided reading lessons also often involve writing because teachers constantly check pupils' comprehension skills. While this benefits lower- and average-attaining pupils, more-able pupils miss out on extended times to read for pleasure and to build up reading stamina. The outstanding teaching in mathematics is characterised by pace, challenge and a strong focus on pupils applying and then explaining their methods. In addition, pupils have daily individual help to remedy any mathematical misconceptions. Marking is a notable strength. Teachers indicate clear points for improvement and pupils check their work against agreed success criteria. Teachers give pupils time to correct their work and so pupils learn from their mistakes.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour in school. The large majority has very positive views. The inspector found that behaviour is typically outstanding and lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils respect their teachers and want to please them. The moment pupils step into school they are ready and eager to learn. They listen most attentively in lessons and are proud of their achievements and keen to be 'the best we can be'. They work well in groups, taking turns and discussing with a high degree of maturity. This type of behaviour is typical, as shown by pupils' consistently good and sometimes excellent progress, their above average attendance and excellent punctuality. Pupils behave politely and considerately in and around school and carry out responsible jobs. Their behaviour at breakfast club, playtimes and lunchtimes is equally sensible, with boys and girls of different ages playing together happily in many different playground games. Pupils themselves rate behaviour as '9.9 out of 10!' but admit, 'We behave better in school than outside.'

Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school. They explained, 'If you're having problems at home or at school the teachers help you sort it out. Teachers help us to be what we want to be.' The school's meticulous behaviour and incident records confirm pupils' positive views. Staff keep careful notes of any incidents, including very minor ones, and follow up concerns

instantly. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying because 'Everyone in the school helps you.' They explained, 'No-one says gay here. We know to give racism the red card.' They understand the dangers of cyber-bullying and showed how staff check their 'blogs' before they are added to the school website. Pupils follow their class charters which they set up as part of their work on Rights Respecting Schools. Pupils' behaviour exemplifies, 'It is my right to have a good education so I can get a good job.'

Leadership and management

Senior leaders have a strong focus on raising achievement. They monitor the management of performance effectively. They analyse rigorously the reasons for any slight dips in pupil performance, as in mathematics in 2011, and target support where it is most needed. As a result of its actions, achievement in mathematics is back to its previously outstanding levels. This demonstrates the school's good capacity for continued improvement. The school has identified a need to strengthen reading and writing provision across the school in order to raise attainment further. The actions to raise attainment in English are leading to higher achievement in writing, but have yet to have full impact on more-able pupils' reading. Gaps between the performances of different groups of pupils have narrowed because of scrupulous assessment procedures. Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals now achieve as well as other groups. This is because regular professional development and training ensure at least good teaching quality in all classes.

The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate. Although leadership and management are judged to be outstanding by the school, and some aspects of current levels of work support this, there has been insufficient time for some plans to have a demonstrable impact. The role of subject co-ordinators is not developed fully and so they make a limited contribution to school improvement planning through checking teaching and learning in their subject, for instance.

Members of the governing body know the school's strengths and weaknesses and play a full part in analysing performance and setting an agenda for improvement. They ensure that safeguarding, including safe recruitment, meets current government guidelines and is effective. Governors come into school regularly, keep a careful check on assessment data and know the right questions to ask in order to challenge school leaders.

The school promotes equality of opportunity successfully and tackles discrimination rigorously. Recent work on Rights Respecting Schools links closely to its successful promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum is developing well and takes full account of pupils' interests and needs. The impact is seen in pupils' respect for others and their lively interest in world affairs, including the world of work. Pupils know and demonstrate that 'we are responsible for our own actions and treat everyone equally.'

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.



28 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Church of England Aided Junior School, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 7HB

Thank you for your polite and friendly welcome. I really enjoyed meeting so many of you. A special 'thank you' goes to the four groups of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 who spent time showing me their work, showing me the books in the library and classrooms and talking to me about what it is like to be at your school. You go to a good school. It has an interesting curriculum which appeals to you. You make good progress in reading and writing and outstanding progress in mathematics. I was impressed at the quality of your work and the mature way you work together and discuss complicated issues such as who is most to blame for the tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet. I enjoyed hearing so many of you read and agree with you that you need a wider range of fiction and non-fiction reading materials, especially the older pupils. I have asked your school to give those of you who find reading easy more opportunities to read, and for you to read in different situations, so that you learn to read fluently, with expression and follow the punctuation correctly.

You are taught well and your teachers succeed in making learning fun. Your behaviour is outstanding and you have an excellent understanding of safety. You certainly provide good role-models for each other. Your attendance is above average because you want to come to school. I was impressed at your excellent listening skills in lessons. Your school is led and managed well. Your headteacher does a lot. I have suggested that other staff help too in planning for improvements.

I hope you enjoy these new challenges. You can help by continuing to come to school every day and working as hard as you can so you reach the ambitious goals you have set yourselves. I send you my very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Clark
Lead Inspector

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