

St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Claremont Terrace, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 2LE

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and requires improvement in Years 1 to 4. Some teachers do not expect enough of pupils; lessons move along too slowly, work is too easy and teachers do not ask questions that encourage pupils to think hard.
- The curriculum does not contain enough exciting activities or plenty of opportunities for pupils to see how learning in different subjects can link together.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their writing and mathematics skills by practising them in different subjects.
- Marking does not always tell pupils clearly how to improve their work. Pupils are not provided with the time to act upon any advice that is given.
- Information about pupils' progress is not well enough used to provide leaders with a clear understanding of how much progress pupils are making in different classes.
- Leaders do not set targets for teachers that require them to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- While senior leaders have a clear understanding of how to improve the school, they do not check carefully enough that their actions are having an impact.

The school has the following strengths

- There is good teaching that engages pupils and helps them to make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. There are clear procedures to teach knowledge of sounds and letters to help pupils read unfamiliar words and enjoy books.
- The governing body has a clear view of the school because it regularly checks the school's work. With the headteacher, it has taken decisive action to tackle weak teaching in Years 5 and 6.
- The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour is good; they say they feel very safe. Attendance has improved.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors had meetings with staff, groups of pupils, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school's improvement plan; the school's data relating to pupils' progress; monitoring reports; the work pupils were doing in their books; and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons taught by 12 teachers and listened to a group of pupils read. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher conducted three joint observations of lessons with the inspectors. The inspectors also observed senior leaders reporting back to teachers on their findings regarding the quality of learning and pupils' achievement in lessons.
- The inspectors met some parents informally at the start and end of the school day and spoke to some by telephone. They took into account letters, the seven responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own survey of parents.
- Eighteen staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Gordon Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Belita Scott

Additional Inspector

Anne Firth

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British, although there is a significant proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, two thirds of whom speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is average.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average.
- There are on-site breakfast and after-school clubs which are managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- In September 2011 the school changed status from a first school to a primary school. From September 2010 it retained Year 5 pupils who would previously have attended middle school. It moved into the refurbished middle school building in January 2012.
- There have been significant changes to staffing and staff absences.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer of 2013, improve the quality of teaching to at least good in order to raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress, especially in writing and mathematics, and in Years 1 to 4, by:
 - ensuring teachers always expect the best from their pupils
 - offering more opportunities for pupils to improve their writing and mathematics skills by practising them in different subjects
 - using the school's information about how well pupils are working in order to set tasks which are hard enough for all pupils and require pupils to work at a quick pace
 - improving marking so that pupils know clearly how to make their work better and have time to act upon advice
 - asking questions which give pupils the chance to explain their ideas fully and to think harder
 - developing the curriculum so that it offers pupils more exciting and stimulating learning experiences and helps them to see how learning in different subjects can link together.
- Increase the impact that leaders at all levels have on pupils' attainment and progress by:
 - improving the school's procedures for checking pupils' progress so that leaders and class teachers plan work that ensures pupils are making at least good progress
 - using performance management more robustly to give teachers more demanding targets for improving the attainment and progress of pupils in their classes
 - checking regularly that plans for improvement are fully in place and are having a positive impact in driving improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children start school with skills that are below those typically expected for their age. Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage so they start Year 1 with broadly average skills for their age. Most pupils make the progress expected of them in Years 1 to 6 so that they reach the nationally expected standards in tasks and tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in English and mathematics.
- More Year 6 pupils reach the nationally expected standards in reading than is the case nationally. However, too few pupils reach nationally expected standards in writing. In previous years progress in writing in Years 5 and 6 was inadequate as a result of weak teaching. Inspection evidence shows that the school has acted to get rid of the weak teaching. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 now make good progress. Teachers have identified the most able pupils and are setting them harder work.
- Pupils make the progress expected of them in Years 1 to 4 but not enough do better than this in writing and mathematics. This is because teachers do not require pupils to work quickly enough in lessons and work is often too easy. Improvements to teaching have not gone on long enough to be fully effective.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs reached standards in line with similar pupils nationally, except in writing. However, the gap remains between them and all pupils. Pupils of Asian background did well in reading and mathematics and made good progress. Their attainment was lower in writing and progress was less rapid.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. There are some good lessons, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 5 and 6, but in other lessons the pace of learning is too slow. While there are good examples of teachers making sure that work set is at the right level, teachers do not plan work well enough to get the best out of some pupils. There are some easy activities and teachers do not ask questions which make pupils think hard. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils practised how to follow co-ordinates to discover patterns. While some of these were at an appropriate level of difficulty, opportunities were missed for pupils to make their own designs or see how co-ordinates are used in other subjects, for example in science.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked and this marking helpfully tells pupils how successful they have been in their work. However, teachers do not always give clear advice about how to make their work better. When they do so, pupils are not given time to act on that advice.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have targets, they are clear about how well they are doing and how to take the next steps in their learning to reach their targets. Senior leaders are reviewing targets in other year groups so that teachers and pupils will have higher expectations of what pupils can learn.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is good teaching of how to link sounds and letters, writing and number. There is a wide range of engaging activities, both indoors and outdoors, which help children to enjoy, and make good progress in, all aspects of learning.
- Where teaching is good in Years 1 to 6, teachers make lessons interesting, allowing pupils the chance to explore, experiment and learn through practical, problem-solving activities. In a successful science lesson with Year 5 pupils, pupils were excited when they carried out an experiment to explore the properties of materials and used role play to find out how atoms moved in liquids, solids and gases. This resulted in pupils making good progress.
- While pupils do a lot of writing in religious education, they do not do plenty of writing in other subjects. "Brave Writing" folders, which contain pupils' written work, show that pupils are now

making expected progress in writing, but they do not write at length often enough to make progress good.

- A clear strategy which is beginning to improve writing is to use stories to give pupils ideas for writing. For example, the reading of the Alex Rider stories in Year 6 was used to encourage pupils to write messages about Alex's problems. In Year 1 the teacher used *In The Dark, Dark Wood* and *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*, to excite pupils. They drew maps and made notes to plan their own stories. These good examples are not consistently evident in all classes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are happy in school and enjoy their lessons when they are excited by their learning. Occasionally there is some restlessness when their work is less stimulating or they have to listen to their teachers for too long. They respect one another, work and play well together and are very polite to adults.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good in their lessons and any minor misbehaviour is quickly dealt with by their teachers. Indeed, much excellent behaviour was evident in lessons observed during the inspection and around the school.
- Inspectors analysed the school's records of behaviour, which showed that behaviour is consistently good. This is as a result of the successful use of clear expectations. The few pupils who find it hard to behave well are helped by clear rules. As a result, there were no exclusions last year.
- Pupils feel very safe and are aware of different forms of bullying. They say that any form of bullying, including cyber-bullying, is rare and, when it does happen, they are confident that it will be quickly dealt with. They know that older pupils, as well as the teachers and other adults in school, will help with any problems.
- Playground 'buddies' help pupils play safely and enjoyably together and they develop social skills in the breakfast and after-school clubs. Pupils like the house system and the responsibility of being house captains and librarians. They say that the school council listens to pupils' concerns and ideas. It has agreed school rules with teachers and talks to school leaders on safety issues that worry pupils.
- Attendance is average. It has improved rapidly as the result of a strong effort by the school to work with parents and pupils.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The headteacher has skilfully managed the school's change to primary school status and the move to a new building. Initial problems with some weak teaching in Years 5 and 6 have been tackled. However, the quality of teaching, attainment and the rates at which pupils make progress continue to require improvement in Years 1 to 4. Improvements to teaching, based on regular lesson observations and clear advice from senior leaders, have not gone on long enough to be fully effective.
- While leaders are clear about what needs to be done to improve the school, they are over optimistic about its strengths. They do not always check strongly enough that what they are doing is having an impact on the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement. For example, leaders do not review pupils' progress regularly enough so that shortfalls in pupils' learning can be spotted and tackled quickly.
- In the past, staff have been rewarded even when their pupils have not done as well as they should have done. Leaders do not set targets for teachers that require them to ensure that the pupils in their class make good progress. Training provided for teachers to help them continue improving their skills has not been fully successful in improving teaching.
- Funding has been used to improve the basic skills of those pupils eligible for the pupil premium.

While these pupils did well in comparison with similar pupils nationally, the gap remains between them and pupils who do not qualify for the pupil premium. Programmes which have been introduced to improve reading are helping pupils read better. However, there are some remaining weaknesses in teaching which stop all pupils making good progress. While this illustrates the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination, the school needs to do more to close the gap in achievement for all pupils.

- At times the curriculum is uninspiring because it lacks activities which excite pupils. There are also too few opportunities which help pupils to see the links which can be made in learning in different subjects. Pupils do not always get enough opportunities to practise their writing and mathematics by being involved in longer and more demanding tasks. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness and to appreciate the wonderful things, such as music, art and literature, that humans have created.
- The local authority has provided support for the teaching of mathematics and English and has helped the school to gain a clearer view of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Such advice has started to improve teaching and pupils' attainment and progress.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has helped the school in its change of status and its move to its new building. It has managed the refurbishment of the building highly effectively through good management of costs. It has acted strongly to improve its skills and has introduced clear procedures to hold the school to account. Governors carry out routine monitoring to evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding on pupils' performance. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. All staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. The governing body has improved its effectiveness through a deliberate decision to offer greater challenge to the school. However, improvements in the way the governing body holds the school to account have not gone on long enough to be fully effective.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122304
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	400248

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Usher
Headteacher	Pauline Johnstone
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2010
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