

St Oswald's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Nash Avenue, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE34 8NS

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

- Achievement overall requires improvement. In mathematics, while standards improved in 2012, they remained below average, particularly for girls. In reading, pupils do not have a strong enough knowledge of how to blend letters and sounds to help them with both their reading and spelling.
- Although teaching has improved, too much still requires improvement. Where this is the case, expectations are too low and pupils are not stretched so that they can make better progress.
- Leadership and management are not good because improvements to teaching and achievement have not been rapid enough. This is because improvement plans do not have precise actions, targets and timescales.
- The headteacher and other leaders have not yet developed a rigorous enough approach to support those teachers whose performance requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are polite, friendly and considerate towards each other. This is because they thrive in a warm family atmosphere with high levels of respect between adults and pupils. They feel safe in school and behave well.
- Some teachers have high expectations and match work well to the abilities of pupils.
- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 improved in 2012.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They get off to a flying start in the nursery where interesting activities help them to enjoy their learning and develop their confidence and language skills.
- Leaders and managers know how well the school is performing because they regularly check the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons taught by eight teachers. In addition inspectors made visits to five lessons to look at pupils' work.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils and heard others in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- The views of 21 parents who responded to Parent View, as well as discussions with some parents at the start of the school day, were taken into account.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, members of the governing body, subject leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- The school's improvement plan and records of teaching, achievement, behaviour and safeguarding procedures were examined.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in and out of lessons, for example at playtimes and during assembly.
- Eight staff submitted their views via a questionnaire, and inspectors also took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Harrison

Additional Inspector

Angela James

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St. Oswald's RC Voluntary Aided is similar in size to other primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to that usually seen.
- The school meets the current floor standards which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has recently gained the International School award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the vast majority is good or better by:
 - providing interesting activities that stimulate the imagination of pupils and are better matched to the different ability levels within classes
 - making sure all pupils are actively involved in whole-class teaching sessions, particularly when teachers are asking questions
 - challenging all pupils, and in particular those of higher ability, with open-ended tasks that require them to think for themselves
 - moving pupils on more quickly when they have made progress within the lesson.
- Strengthen leadership and governance so that improvements to achievement and the quality of teaching are more rapid by:
 - making sure improvement plans have more detailed and precise actions with tight deadlines
 - regularly checking progress against these actions to make sure the desired outcomes are being achieved
 - setting clear, relevant targets where teaching requires improvement and checking progress more often so that action can be taken if targets are not met
 - regularly checking the progress of girls in mathematics and taking timely action to tackle underachievement by any group.
- Raise standards in English and mathematics so that attainment is above average by the time pupils leave the school in Year 6 by:
 - making sure pupils have a good knowledge of letters and sounds so that they can read and spell more effectively
 - giving pupils more opportunities to improve their writing skills in other subjects
 - teaching calculation skills systematically so that all pupils, particularly girls, make good progress in all year groups
 - making sure pupils have more regular opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in real-life situations in order to improve their understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start school in nursery with skills and abilities that are below those usually found for their age. Consistently good and better teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps children to make good progress and gain the skills expected for their age by the time they start Year 1.
- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 improved in 2012 so that they are broadly average in English, but remain below average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils making expected or better levels of progress between Year 2 and Year 6 in both English and mathematics is now close to the national average.
- Standards in reading are improving so that they are now average. This is because pupils enjoy reading regularly to adults and the school provides a good range of interesting books. Reading requires improvement because pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are not able to use letters and sounds well enough in order to make even better progress with their reading and spelling.
- Progress in writing has improved and standards are in line with national averages. Pupils can write extensively and use punctuation well in their English lessons. The quality of writing in other subjects is lower because teachers do not expect pupils to apply the same standards as they do in English.
- Progress in mathematics is good in Year 6 because teaching is lively with high expectations. Year 6 pupils know how well they are doing and how to get to the next level. This is not the case in other year groups. Year 5 pupils told inspectors, 'We would like to know what level we are at and then we could do better.' Pupils are not making enough progress because teachers do not set work that inspires and challenges pupils to think for themselves. They do not have enough opportunities to use their calculation skills in 'real-life' situations and learning tasks are not matched well enough to their different abilities.
- The attainment of girls in mathematics has been much lower than boys for two years now. The enthusiasm of some very confident boys appears to subdue girls who are quieter in lessons. Whilst the school tracks the progress of all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics and takes action when individuals are underachieving, it has not yet used these data to examine the reasons for the underachievement of girls in mathematics.
- The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium is improving so that the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils in the school has closed considerably.
- The achievement of pupils who are supported at school action or school action plus has improved at a similar rate to that of other pupils, and it therefore also requires further improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection but about half still requires improvement. Teaching is organised well so that lessons flow smoothly and pupils usually know what is expected and work hard as a result.
- In the best lessons teachers plan interesting activities that are matched well to the different abilities of pupils and inspire them to succeed. These teachers have high expectations, involve all pupils in question and answer sessions and provide challenging learning tasks. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, higher-ability pupils were given a challenging investigation to find all the sets of whole numbers that would satisfy certain criteria. They worked enthusiastically and made excellent progress in their understanding so that they were able to calculate different types of averages with confidence.
- Where teaching requires improvement, it is because the same learning activity is given to all pupils regardless of their ability and pupils are not moved on quickly enough if the work is too easy. In these lessons, teachers ask questions to provoke pupils to think, but some pupils do not

make enough progress because they are not all expected to contribute.

- All teachers mark pupils' books regularly and thoroughly telling them how they can improve their work and this helps pupils to make progress. The quality of marking varies with some teacher comments and questions that are more useful than others. Teachers have lower expectations of pupils' writing in subjects other than English; for example pupils do not always use capital letters when writing proper nouns or use correct sentence punctuation in their science books. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their writing in other subjects.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support lower-ability pupils. This helps pupils to maintain their concentration so that they make progress in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress in their social skills so that they are able to work in pairs, share ideas and listen to the views of others. There are well-established routines where children are encouraged to take responsibility so that they are happy and show high levels of confidence and self-control.
- All pupils behave well around the school. They are polite, tolerant and show respect towards each other and adults. This is because they are taught moral values from an early age and thrive in a warm Christian atmosphere where everyone is important. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and usually work hard in lessons even when the teaching requires improvement. Teachers manage behaviour well so that disruptions to learning are rare. On the few occasions where behaviour is less than good it is because learning activities are not interesting enough and pupils then find it difficult to concentrate and work hard.
- Pupils say they feel safe and they know how to stay safe; for example, they know that they must not reveal their personal details on the Internet. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare. Pupils know about bullying but say that it doesn't happen at school. Parents say this is a safe and caring school where children are well looked after and behaviour logs confirm this to be the case.
- Attendance is average with a lower than average proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and members of the governing body share a strong determination to improve achievement and the quality of teaching. Standards dipped after the previous inspection because there were a number of staff changes. The fact that achievement improved in both Year 2 and Year 6 in 2012 shows that senior leaders have the capacity to secure further improvements in the future. Leadership and management are not yet good because these improvements have not been rapid enough and there is still too much teaching that is not good.
- The school has a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. This is because it regularly and accurately checks both the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. As a result, the school has correctly identified what it needs to improve and these priorities are set out in a plan. The actions to help the school to achieve these priorities are not specific or detailed enough and some of the timescales are too long.
- The performance of teachers has been managed in line with nationally recognised standards. All teachers have similar targets and this approach has led to a general improvement in the quality of teaching. Teachers are observed regularly and are given good feedback on how to improve, but some teaching is still not good enough. There needs to be a more rigorous approach in cases where teaching is consistently less than good so that targets are specific to individuals and are checked more often.
- The curriculum is effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding so that there are high levels of mutual respect and no evidence of discrimination. The school is not yet fully ensuring equality of opportunity because girls are achieving less well in

mathematics. The curriculum requires improvement because it does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to make progress in their basic numeracy and calculation skills.

- The school takes the safety of pupils seriously and has good systems in place that meet all safeguarding requirements.
- Parents have a very positive view of the school with the vast majority saying they would recommend the school to a friend. Parents are kept well-informed and say that teachers are always available at the start or end of the school day.
- The local authority is providing good support to the school. It has carried out checks on the progress the school is making and reports regularly to the governing body.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows precisely how well the school is performing because it is regularly briefed by the local authority and the headteacher. Members are actively involved in the work of the school. For example, one has checked that safeguarding procedures are in place and that all staff know what those procedures are. The governing body does not yet hold the school fully to account by making sure improvement plans have clear actions and then checking that those actions are having the impact that is needed. The governing body manages resources well to ensure funding is available to support improvements that are needed, for example updating the library to promote pupils' enjoyment of reading. Pupil premium funding has been used successfully to help eligible pupils to catch up.

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	108718
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	405189

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	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M. Frazer
Headteacher	Mrs M. B. Lightfoot
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2010
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