

St Mary Magdalen's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Seaham

Dene House Road, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 7BJ

Inspection dates 17–18 January 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Standards in writing have risen over the last year.
- Teaching is typically good and especially so in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6.
- The marking of pupils' work is thorough and regular and helps them do better next time.
- The school's curriculum captures pupils' interest and links the different parts of their learning together.
- Pupils feel safe and behave well. Their attendance has improved in the past year. They are proud of their school.
- The school's leadership, including the governors, has succeeded in raising staff morale and steadily improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement over the last two years.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual and cultural development is particularly strong.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils' progress is good, it is not yet outstanding because pupils are given too few chances to get on with their work and learn on their own.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding because teachers do not share and learn fully from the best teaching already available in the school.
- Improvements in teaching are slower than they could be because subject leaders are not involved in closely checking and improving the quality of teaching in their subjects.
- The school's leaders do not check the school's performance frequently enough for weaknesses to be addressed rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by 8 teachers.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at their work in books.
- Meetings were held with pupils, governors, a representative of the local authority, and school staff.
- The inspectors took account of 24 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the way the school checks its performance, improvement plans, records of pupils' progress, and school policies.

Inspection team

Mick Hill, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Lovell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium government funding is similar to the national average.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the amount of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure all pupils have chances to get on with their work and learn on their own
 - sharing and learning from the best teaching in the school.
- Improve leadership and management and the rate at which the school is improving by:
 - involving subject leaders in closely checking the quality of teaching and helping to improve it
 - the leaders in school checking the performance of the school more frequently so that weaknesses are identified and addressed rapidly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school with skills which are below those typically expected for their age. Skills in communication, language and literacy are often well below expectations. The majority of children make good progress and leave Reception with skills, including in communication, language and literacy, which are broadly average for their age. This is because the teaching is good and their individual needs are recognised and catered for.
- Progress is steady in Key Stage 1 and the early years of Key Stage 2 and rapid in Years 5 and 6. This is because teaching is typically good and particularly so in the last two years of school. As a result pupils start secondary school with standards similar to, and often better than, those seen nationally.
- Pupils make good progress with their reading. This is because they are taught letters and sounds (phonics) well, and receive good support from teaching assistants. Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure.
- Pupils' standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are good, with a bigger proportion achieving greater than expected progress than is seen nationally. In previous years progress in writing has not been as good as progress in reading and mathematics. This has improved and standards in writing are now level with those expected nationally at the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress similar to that of other pupils. This is because they enjoy school and their teachers and teaching assistants quickly identify those who are struggling with their learning and provide additional help so they can catch up. This is true in all key stages and reflects the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium reach standards that are a little below those of others in the school at the end of Key Stage 2, but are better than those seen for similar pupils nationally. This is because the school has spent the pupil premium wisely on extra teaching assistant support.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. This is the reason for the good progress made by pupils as they go through the school. A particular strength is the quality and frequency of the marking of pupils' work. Teachers' comments help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work and they are encouraged to correct mistakes themselves.
- Lessons are carefully planned. A strong element of this planning is the use of topic work to link different subjects together and to develop their skills, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, in a range of subjects. Current examples of topic work include 'Australia', 'Romulus and Remus', and 'the home front in the Second World War'. In a Year 5 art lesson, for example, pupils made a silhouette painting of a city which had been 'blitzed', linking the study of history with the development of skills used in art.
- Although teaching is typically good, too little is outstanding. This is because pupils are given too few chances to get on with their work and learn on their own. When pupils are given this chance they respond extremely well. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, the majority of pupils were allowed to work on their own, enthusiastically completing a 'connectives challenge'. This allowed the teacher to help a smaller group with their reading. As a result all the pupils in the class made excellent progress.
- Pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils regularly work on longer pieces of writing. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils were guided by a carefully planned series of tasks and a worksheet which guided their writing to do a piece of 'Big Writing'. The 'Big Writing'

initiative has played a key part in the improvements seen in pupils' writing over the last year, as have the opportunities given to pupils to practise their writing in different subjects.

- There are stimulating and informative displays in classrooms and on every available wall space around the school. These display pupils' work of the highest quality and are a further encouragement to pupils to improve their writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school provides a very positive and happy environment in which pupils can learn and play. Pupils are very welcoming and polite to visitors. They are proud of their school.
- Pupils, including those whose circumstances might put them at risk, feel very safe. They know about different types of bullying and say this is rare in their school. They are secure in that they know who they should turn to if they have a concern and that it will be dealt with immediately. Parents feel that the school is a safe place for their children.
- Teachers expect the best behaviour and there are established routines which the pupils follow. Pupils have a very good sense of right and wrong and treat each other with care and respect. They work together well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The spiritual development of pupils is a particular strength of the school. So too is the encouragement pupils are given to understand other cultures. The 'Festival of Light', in which children in the Early Years Foundation Stage celebrate different religious festivals from around the world, is a striking example of this.
- Praise is regularly used by teachers and cements the excellent relationships between pupils and staff.
- Attendance has improved in the past year and is now at levels typically seen in primary schools. This is because the school checks on reasons for absence carefully and because pupils are happy to come to school.

The leadership and management are good

- The school's leadership team, including the governors, share a great determination to build an increasingly happy and successful school. They have succeeded in steadily improving the performance of the school and building staff morale from a previously low level. They know that the quality of teaching is the key to further improvement.
- Although the quality of teaching has improved over the last two years and is now good, all teaching is not yet outstanding. This is because teachers do not share and learn enough from the best teaching already available in school. Where this has happened on an individual level the improvement has been dramatic. This success provides a tried and tested method to use to bring about further improvement across the school.
- The local authority has provided regular and effective support over the past two years to help the school to make steady improvement. The termly reports from the Education Development Partner have been a valuable check on performance. However, the performance of the school is not checked frequently enough to ensure weaknesses are identified and addressed rapidly. The headteacher and deputy headteacher check on the performance of teachers. Promotion and deployment of teachers is linked to their success in helping pupils make good progress. Extra support and lots of training opportunities are provided to help teachers in this task. However, this checking is not focused closely enough on particular subjects to ensure quicker improvement. This is because subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in checking and helping improve the quality of teaching in the subjects for which they are responsible.
- The school's curriculum is well planned and varied. Topics are carefully thought through and used effectively to stimulate pupils' interest, motivate them and extend their knowledge of the

wider world. In a Year 5 classroom, for example, the location of each topic is helpfully marked on a world map displayed on the classroom wall.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors work well with school leaders and the local authority and contribute well to the improvement of the school. They ensure safeguarding procedures are followed. Governors visit the school regularly to see at first hand the work of the school. They robustly challenge school leaders to further improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils and oversee the management of the performance of teachers, of which they have a good understanding. The school's finances are managed competently and, as a result, the buildings, although small for the number of pupils now in the school, are well maintained and provide a good working environment for pupils and staff.
-

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	114236
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	405504

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Tom Burke
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Rhodes
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2011
Telephone number	0191 581 3055
Fax number	0191 581 3165
Email address	seaham.stmary.magdalens.rc@durhamlea.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

