

# St Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Durham Road, Spennymoor, County Durham, DL16 6SL

**Inspection dates** 26–27 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is good and is improving rapidly. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Excellent pastoral care and high expectations from all teachers produce a warm, supportive learning environment in which pupils thrive and enjoy learning. Children get off to a very good start in the Reception class because learning activities are extremely well planned and teamwork between staff is first rate.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are supported to achieve as well as other pupils through the good support they receive from dedicated, well-trained teaching assistants.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are kind and supportive of each other; older pupils relish their roles as buddies who look after younger children. Everyone feels safe and secure in this happy, vibrant school.
- Teaching is good and there is a good proportion that is outstanding. Teachers have been well trained and are keen to learn from each other to improve even further.
- Leadership and management are good. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher has provided a relentless drive to improve outcomes for pupils, to ensure they do the very best they can while in school. She is well supported in her ambitions for an outstanding school by the recently appointed deputy headteacher, all staff and governors.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and achievement are not yet outstanding because of some inconsistencies in developing pupils' ability to talk about their learning, their rapid recall of number bonds, and in teachers' marking and feedback to help pupils improve their work.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons, four of which were shared observations with senior staff.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, staff, governors, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence about the school including: the school's evaluation of its work, the school's information about pupils' progress, documentation relating to teachers' performance and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 31 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 24 responses from staff.

## Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie McGrane

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British heritage, with very few from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that pupils' achievement moves to outstanding by:
  - developing teachers' skills to promote pupils' discussion about their learning so that they consolidate and deepen their thinking and improve their understanding to a higher level
  - ensuring that all staff plan frequent opportunities for pupils to develop good number knowledge and speed in their mental calculations
  - extending the best marking and feedback practices across the school, so that all pupils benefit from the best opportunities to improve their work and move to the next level.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills that are below, and in some areas well-below, those expected for their age. They settle quickly into routines and develop good social and communication skills which accelerate their learning. By the end of Reception the proportion of children reaching the expected level for their age is increasing significantly as the quality of provision has improved rapidly this year.
- Good progress continues across the school, so that by the end of Year 2 pupils' performance in national assessments is at the national average. In 2012, the performance of Year 6 pupils was significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, which represented good achievement for this group of pupils. Inspection evidence and school data show that pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to reach the expected level in these subjects, with a good proportion who will exceed this and several who are likely to achieve the very high level 6.
- Well-planned programmes for teaching early reading and writing skills are raising standards and helping to increase pupils' learning in other subjects. Regular practice allows pupils to develop good fluency and understanding in their reading, so that by the end of Year 2 most reach the level expected for their age.
- Progress in mathematical knowledge and skills is generally good, and in some classes outstanding. However, pupils are not as fluent in their number knowledge as they are with letters and the sounds that they make. The school recognises the need to improve pupils' rapid recall of number bonds so that their mental agility in mathematics improves to support even faster progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and those who are eligible for free school meals are well supported to learn as well as others, through a wealth of well-planned intervention programmes. Pupil premium funds are used well to provide additional learning resources and to ensure that the pupils for whom they are intended have access to all the activities that the school provides. Their attendance matches that of other pupils and gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils are reducing well.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good, with an increasing amount that is outstanding. It is improving quickly because of good training opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants, and the excellent teamwork that the headteacher has developed. This promotes a high level of professional support and sharing of good practice between staff.
- Teachers form excellent relationships with their pupils and have high expectations of their behaviour and hard work. This creates a positive learning environment and teaches pupils that their learning is very important. Because of this, pupils always work hard to please their teachers. They sustain good concentration and are determined to succeed.
- It is evident when observing lessons, that teachers give a lot of thought to preparing activities that will engage pupils well by making their learning fun. Comments from both older and younger pupils confirm that they agree. For example, children in the Reception class had tremendous fun planning an 'assault' course, then giving instructions to their 'super-hero' on how to pass from end to end by going 'under, over, around and across' various obstacles. All staff entered fully into the fun in their various roles and children learned at an exceptional rate because they were so intent on getting the instructions just right.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give good advice on how to improve. Where this is most effective, teachers ensure that pupils fully understand how to improve their work and make time available for them to do this. This high quality feedback back is not yet consistent across all classes so that pupils' progress varies from occasionally excellent to mainly good.
- Teachers make effective use of talk in lessons to assess how well pupils are learning. However,

they do not always develop and deepen pupils' understanding of their learning as much as they might by asking probing questions and inviting pupils to add to each other's ideas. When this does occur, as in a Year 6 mathematics lesson about analysing data, pupils are seen to push their thinking in order to come up with explanations and definitions about their work and move towards a higher level of understanding.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Behaviour is excellent and ensures that time is well used in lessons. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They enjoy their learning and delight in pleasing their teachers. They are expected to keep going and support each other, so that overcoming difficulties in learning presents no problems. Pupils are convinced they will succeed and they do.
- Pupils, and their parents, have absolute confidence in staff to look after them. They have been taught to understand the difference between bullying and occasional 'unkind' behaviour. They say that bullying is rare and that staff take any concerns they have very seriously.
- Pupils are taught how to assess risks and keep themselves safe from the earliest age. They understand, for example, about the need for road safety, wearing protective clothing for certain activities and the risks associated with the internet.
- The school provides excellent pastoral care and support for pupils and their families. Pupils are well known to adults who are quick to spot any changes in their behaviour or attitudes to work. The school has robust systems to support pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, so that they and their families know exactly where to turn for help.
- Family group arrangements provide excellent opportunities for good relationships to be fostered between older and younger pupils. Older pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility by taking care of younger children around the school, at playtime and during weekly lunches together. Younger pupils, in turn, learn much from the excellent, caring example set by older pupils and are eager to copy their caring ways.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership is transforming the school at a rapid rate. Since the previous inspection, she has managed staff changes extremely well to establish a very strong team which is fully committed to her vision to get the best for every pupil. Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement, teaching, the curriculum and leadership have all improved significantly.
- Recent appointments and changes to leadership roles are having a strong influence on accelerating improvement as the deputy headteacher, subject and phase leaders improve their skills and deepen their knowledge of the school. Good systems to check on pupils' learning underpin the improvements to their achievement. The school's evaluations of its work are accurate and provide a strong base for further improvement.
- Teachers' performance is well managed. The school sets straightforward, measureable targets for staff which are linked to pupils' progress, other school priorities and salary progression. Staff questionnaires show a unanimous commitment to the school's aims, and morale is high.
- Provision for all pupils to have equality of opportunity to succeed is very good. Staff are vigilant about checking pupils' progress and the school plans a wide range of support throughout each day so that no one falls behind. Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium do well and often exceed their targets because of effective support.
- The rapidly developing curriculum is creatively planned to inspire pupils to learn and provides plenty of opportunity to reinforce their basic skills. A themed approach allows pupils and teachers to follow their special interests so that learning is fuelled by enthusiasm and moves at a brisk pace. Outdoor learning has been extremely well developed and is used to very good effect in those classes where pupils clearly learn best outdoors. A good example was seen with Year 4 pupils who worked 'flat out' in blustery, snowy conditions to build Tudor shelters, with evident

enjoyment and good humour. The rich curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

■ The local authority provides regular, light touch support for the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors are well informed about the school; they hold it to account well for pupils' achievement and teachers' performance. They give very good support to the school through regular visits to monitor its work, give support in classrooms and organise the Friends of the School group which raises considerable funds each year. Governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that pupils and staff are safe on site. Finances are managed well and governors hold the school to account for the way in which extra funding (pupil premium) is used.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114260
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	401418

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	205
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christopher Butler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Reeves
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 814285
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