

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Duckpool Lane, Whickham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE16 4HB

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Teaching is consistently good and occasionally outstanding. Teachers use questions well and ensure work is well matched to pupils' individual skills and abilities. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- The curriculum offers pupils many exciting opportunities to develop their skills in writing, mathematics and information technology. Pupils enjoy history, geography, music and art and a range of sports and extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They care exceptionally well for one another and for people less fortunate than themselves; they say they feel extremely safe. Attendance is above average.
- The school offers excellent care and support and provides extremely well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Recent changes to school leadership have been well managed. New leaders have introduced initiatives that have improved marking and the teaching of mathematics and writing.
- The headteacher and the governing body have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have acted to remove weak teaching and know that the key to further improvement is to increase the rate at which pupils make progress. This is an improving school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress pupils have made has been inconsistent in some classes in the past two years. More rigorous targets for teachers in relation to pupils' progress have not yet had time to help all pupils make up for some previous slower progress.
- In some instances, when teachers mark work, they do not allow time for pupils to act upon advice given.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors had meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the vice-chair and another member of the governing body. An inspector also spoke to the school's local authority link inspector.
- 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 11 lessons taught by seven teachers and listened to groups of pupils read. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- The headteacher conducted two joint observations of lessons with the inspectors. The inspectors also observed the headteacher reporting back to teachers on her findings regarding the quality of learning and pupils' achievement in lessons.
- The inspectors took into account the 71 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also spoke to parents and analysed the school's own questionnaire of parents' views.
- Fifteen staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Gordon Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Lovell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children that are looked after.)
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- There have been many changes to staffing in the past two years.
- During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were on a residential visit.
- The school is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently outstanding, to raise standards and rates of pupils' progress further, by:
 - embedding recent changes to teachers' performance management so that leaders and teachers further develop the knowledge and skills needed to ensure that all pupils consistently make at least good progress each year
 - ensuring pupils have time to act upon advice given by their teachers about how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school with skills that are in line with those typically expected for their age. Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 as a result of good and occasionally outstanding teaching. There is good teaching of how to link letters and the sounds they make, writing, number and calculation, to help pupils rapidly develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- As a result, standards at the end of Year 2 have improved in the last three years and are typically above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- At the end of Year 6, standards are typically above average. In 2012, attainment was average. This was a year group who had lower starting points at the end of Year 2 but who made good progress in Key Stage 2. Indeed, a higher proportion of pupils than is the case nationally made more than expected progress in mathematics and writing.
- Likewise, the work of pupils currently in Year 6 is average. They have made good progress from their varying starting points, which overall were below average at the end of Year 2.
- In 2012, fewer of the pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium made expected progress in English and mathematics than other pupils in the school. In national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2012, the attainment of those eligible for free school meals was one year behind that of other pupils in the school in mathematics; in English, it was five terms behind.
- The school has recognised that this is an area that needs addressing. It now helps the pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium to make the same good progress as is made by pupils who are not eligible for this additional funding.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are helped to make the same good progress as their classmates. This shows the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.
- Inspection evidence shows that progress in reading is good. This is a result of a consistent focus on reading and good teaching in how to link letters and the sounds they make to help pupils read words they are not used to. There is an effective focus in all classes on helping pupils to enjoy books and read more often in school and at home.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall. Many aspects that the school has introduced, when fully implemented, have the capacity to make teaching outstanding. However, not all teachers yet have a clear enough understanding of what constitutes outstanding progress or the skills needed to ensure that their teaching is strong enough so that the few pupils who have fallen behind can catch up quickly.
- The best lessons have interesting topics and a range of exciting activities that move at a brisk pace. Teachers involve pupils in using information technology and talking to their partners to explore ideas and solve problems. Teachers are very skilful at explaining what pupils are to learn. They lead them through ways to do tasks and pupils learn quickly.
- All of these excellent approaches were seen in Year 4 in outstanding teaching of exploring different sentence structures. The teacher engaged pupils through his enthusiasm for the subject and skilfully questioned them about the way sentences could be improved. He encouraged pupils to express and develop their ideas and they made rapid progress.
- Teachers check pupils' understanding and, with the help of very skilful teaching assistants, offer extra help as the lesson progresses. Teachers use information about pupils' skills and abilities increasingly well to plan work which stretches the most able pupils and gives them extra work that challenges them further during lessons.
- Teachers use targets extremely well so that pupils know very clearly what they need to do to reach the next level in their work. Pupils' work is regularly marked and helpfully tells them how

successful they have been in their work and how to improve it. However, teachers do not always give pupils time to act upon any advice they give.

- There is good teaching of mathematics, which offers pupils opportunities to improve their understanding of a wide range of mathematical skills and to make good progress. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in mathematics in solving challenging problems related to everyday life. For example, in the Year 1 class, the teacher helped pupils to develop their understanding of tens and units through counting money and then further challenged the most able pupils to develop their skills in addition.
- Teachers use pupils' reading and the many engaging topics they cover in a range of subjects as the starting points for writing activities. As a result, pupils write regularly in English and in subjects across the curriculum. Consequently, rates of progress have risen.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils say that behaviour is excellent in their lessons. Indeed, highly admirable behaviour was evident in lessons during the inspection as well as around the school. Some minor delays in response to teachers among younger pupils were the result of excitement and a desire to be involved in their learning rather than poor behaviour.
- Pupils play and work exceptionally well together. Impressively, pupils of all ages settle to work independently and follow clear rules for sharing resources, for example, respecting the time allocated to them for computer work.
- They respect and care for one another extremely well and talk keenly, positively and politely to adults about their school. Their involvement in the UNICEF Rights Respecting School initiative has had a remarkable effect on their tolerance and care for one another and their understanding of the needs of people around the world. This is also as a result of the excellent, sensitive care they receive from adults in the school.
- The school's records of behaviour show that the behaviour of almost all pupils has been excellent in the past three years. As a result, there have been no exclusions. Pupils are punctual and attendance is consistently above average.
- Pupils feel exceptionally safe. They are aware of different forms of bullying, including name-calling. They are adamant that there is no bullying, although friends occasionally fall out. Such minor differences are quickly dealt with by 'buddies' who help all pupils and by adults.
- The school council has helped to plan and raise funds to improve the playground and organises competitions and fund-raising for various charities.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. While the self-evaluation summary she presented to the inspection was optimistic about the school's effectiveness, this was as a result of her desire for the school to be the best it can be. In-depth discussions during the inspection reflected accurately the school's current position and presented clear evidence of what has been done to improve the school.
- The headteacher is a highly respected leader who demands the highest standards. She has created strong teamwork and high morale across the school. She has the vision and confidence to develop other leaders in school and to allow them to introduce new approaches based on clear research and appropriate training. New leaders have already had an impact on improving the quality of marking and target-setting and the teaching of writing and mathematics, but there is still some work to be done to ensure that this is consistently outstanding.
- All leaders regularly assess the quality of teaching, analyse data about pupils' progress and look at pupils' work so that a consistent approach to learning is evident across school and pupils now make good progress in all classes. The headteacher, in particular, has a very clear view of what constitutes good teaching and is extremely rigorous in her feedback to teachers about the quality of their teaching.

- Performance management is clearly focused on increasing the rates at which pupils make progress, improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. Teachers are very clear that they will only be rewarded when their pupils have achieved as well as, or better than, they should have done. The headteacher has set demanding targets for teachers. However, these targets have only recently been applied and have not yet had time to have a full impact on attainment and progress.
- The curriculum is extremely engaging and contributes strongly to pupils' highly developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. While it is clearly focused on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, it also provides very many opportunities for pupils to develop their love of history, art, science and religious education.
- The local authority works very effectively with the school. It has offered high quality training, helpful guidance on personnel issues and advice that has led to improvements in the quality of teaching across school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body offers strong support to the school and has recently begun to offer greater challenge based on analysis of examinations data. For example, governors wish to address the shortfall in attainment for the pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. They have acted decisively to remove some weak teaching. Governors have recently introduced a programme to visit classes to see how well pupils are learning. Their findings are fed back clearly to other governors. The governing body skilfully manages the budget and has clear plans to deal with projected shortfalls. The Chair and vice-chair are very well informed about the school and use governors' expertise to full effect, for example in budget management, provision for pupils with special educational needs or in ensuring the appointment of the best staff. They monitor the performance of all staff and make sure that they have received appropriate training, for example, to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm through safeguarding systems which meet current guidelines.

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	108396
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	412476

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Currie
Headteacher	Mary McMillan
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2008
Telephone number	0191 4205828
Fax number	0191 4205830
Email address	stmarysrcprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

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