

St Godric's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Thornley Road, Wheatley Hill, Durham, DH6 3NR

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

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.

- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics to reach standards that are at least in line with the national average by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. On occasion, it is outstanding. Pupils enjoy learning. As a result, pupils of all abilities work very hard and achieve well.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and this is supporting the rapidly accelerating progress they are now making. Attendance is now in line with the national average and is continuing to improve.
- Pupils feel valued and extremely well cared for and parents overwhelmingly agree. As a result, they respond well to their teachers and take very good care of each other. They state that they feel safe and happy in school.
- The headteacher, well supported by her deputies and middle leaders, drives school improvement highly effectively. There has been a successful focus on improving the quality of teaching and achievement. Teachers are held closely to account for the progress pupils make.
- The senior team are well supported by the governing body whose members are fully involved in the school's successful drive for improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding to lead to a higher proportion of pupils making consistently outstanding progress.
- Teachers do not always have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Not all teachers' questioning of pupils is as sharp as the very best practice seen in the school.
- The rate of pupils' progress in writing, while good, is not yet as strong as it is in reading and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- The inspector talked with pupils about their work in lessons, looked at books, listened to pupils read and met with two groups of pupils to gain their views about the school.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, representatives of the local authority and school leaders.
- During the inspection, the inspector took account of 37 responses to the online survey (Parent View), analysis of the school's own survey of parents' views and informal discussions with parents.
- The inspector took account of the 11 questionnaires returned by staff members.
- A number of documents were scrutinised, including: school improvement plans; records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding; minutes of meetings of the governing body and records of school leaders' checks made on lessons and information on the management of staff performance.
- The inspector also took account of the school's own current data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

Alan Sergison, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The school is federated with another local school. The headteacher is headteacher of both schools and there is one governing body.
- A number of senior leaders are relatively new to their role.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those children in the care of the local authority or those from service families, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school runs a breakfast club for pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Healthy School status .

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress and to raise standards further, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - consistently have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and always make these clear
 - refine their questioning skills so that they are all as good as the very best practice seen in the school
 - have opportunities to share more widely the skills, expertise and best practice found within the school and in other schools.
- Speed up the rate of pupils' progress in writing, particularly for boys, so that it equals that in reading and mathematics by:
 - providing pupils with further opportunities to improve their basic skills and write at length and across a range of subjects
 - ensuring that boys' imagination is captured sufficiently to help them write imaginatively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- From their individual starting points, pupils make good progress. Attainment fluctuates because of the small numbers in each cohort, but overall is at least in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below and on occasion well below those typically expected for their age, particularly in their language and mathematical skills. In the very small cohorts of pupils entering the school, this can vary significantly year to year. Staff provide challenging and interesting activities for children and they make good progress. Many are reaching the standard expected by the time they move to Year 1.
- Standards across the school fluctuate significantly as the result of small class groups. However, as the result of good teaching, pupils continue to make good progress from their starting points and leave Key Stage 1 with standards at least in line with age-related expectations. This good progress continues across Key Stage 2 and standards are getting closer to above average in reading and mathematics and in line in writing. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Inspection evidence confirms that rates of pupils' progress are now accelerating.
- Performance in writing, particularly for boys, is not yet as strong as in mathematics and reading. Although pupils make good progress, their basic skills are not yet fully embedded and they do not always apply these well in other subjects. Teaching does not always capture boys' enthusiasm and their writing often lacks imagination.
- Teaching places a high priority on the development of pupils' reading skills and significant recent improvements have been made. Pupils are taught successfully how to recognise letters and the sounds they make (phonics). This is illustrated in the recent improvements in performance in the national phonics screening test in Year 1. Pupils state that they enjoy reading. Older pupils express a preference for the work of specific authors and styles of writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in line with their peers. This is because their needs are identified at an early stage and teachers work in close partnership with skilled teaching assistants to ensure that they receive the right support they need.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to target support to those pupils eligible for such funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. These pupils make good progress. In the Year 6 national tests in 2013, the gap between their performance and that of their peers narrowed significantly. In reading, writing and mathematics, they were around half a term behind their peers, compared to five terms behind in the previous year. Inspection evidence confirms the success of the school's actions to support these pupils.
- Regular checks by senior leaders on the progress pupils make is ensuring that overall, pupils of all ability, including the most able, make good progress and have the opportunity to perform equally well. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Teachers are held to account for the progress pupils make and where pupils are seen to be in danger of falling behind, there is swift and appropriate support provided.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good. On occasion, it is outstanding. The school's records support this judgment and the impact on pupils' good progress.
- There is strong mutual respect between adults and pupils and this leads to a positive climate for learning and pupils striving to do their best. Activities are set that respond to pupils' needs so that they can get to work with confidence. Lessons are interesting and show the strength of teachers' subject knowledge.

- The teaching of new skills and knowledge is challenging and stimulating so that pupils sustain their concentration. This was evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage, when children went on a hunt for examples of the new sound they were learning. Another group were highly motivated to plan a story-writing activity using a story board strategy. Sharp questioning by their teachers and high expectations, ensured children were engrossed in their activities.
- However, on occasion, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high. As a result, the pace of learning slows and some pupils lose interest. Sometimes the questioning of pupils is not as incisive as seen in the very best practice, which probes and extends pupils' learning.
- The quality of marking in pupils' books is a real strength. Work in all subjects is thoroughly marked and comments provided that inform pupils what they have to do to move to the next stage. Pupils have the opportunity to respond to these comments and they really appreciate this guidance which supports them to achieve well.
- Reading and mathematics are taught effectively and this has resulted in pupils making particularly good progress in these areas. Progress in writing is also good, but not yet as strong, particularly for boys. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to improve their basic skills by writing at length across a range of subjects in the curriculum.
- Pupils are aware of the level at which they are working and what they have to do to improve to move to the next level. This is supporting the good progress they make.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In and around school behaviour is exemplary at all times as a result of the high expectations of all staff. All staff agree about the very high standards of behaviour.
- Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and this is making a very significant contribution to the accelerated levels of progress now being seen.
- The school has a calm and purposeful ethos. All adults and pupils get along with one another extremely well in a very harmonious school community. The mutual respect between adults and pupils is apparent in their happy, friendly relationships throughout the day.
- Pupils are very attentive in lessons and increasingly acquire skills that enable them to work independently. They share resources and willingly engage in whole-class and group discussion, resulting in an extremely positive impact on learning and progress. The school often receives complimentary letters and comments about the excellent behaviour of pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils all agree that they feel happy, very safe and are looked after well. Parents agree. There were no concerns expressed about bullying at all. Pupils were well aware of the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and knew how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.
- School 'buddies' relish the opportunity to take responsibility to support younger pupils. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of their classmates, particularly those who because of disability or a particular need require specific support. As one pupil remarked, 'The school is a welcoming community, teachers push us to our limits and encourage us to do our best'.
- Pupils confirmed that they were confident that if they had any problems they had a range of adults to turn to for support and issues would be dealt with swiftly.
- Parents express overwhelmingly positive views about the school and believe that pupils' behaviour is excellent. The views of many were summed up in the words of one who said, 'the quality of care, support and teaching in the school are outstanding!'
- The school has worked successfully to improve attendance. This is now broadly in line with the national average and continuing to improve.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, well supported by the two experienced deputy headteachers, provides very

strong leadership for the school. Their view for the future of the school and drive have ensured a good focus on improving teaching and learning with high quality training for staff. The headteacher has the highest expectations of her staff and pupils and the school is well placed to improve.

- Middle leaders make a good contribution to the development of their areas. There is a collegiate approach to school improvement. Effective use of data on pupils' progress leads to clear priorities and actions to raise attainment. Success is very evident especially in reading. However, although improving strongly, leadership and management are not yet outstanding because some leaders are relatively new to role and not yet had time to have a full impact on pupils' attainment and progress.
- The checks made on the quality of teaching are good and advice is provided to resolve the few weaker aspects. However, as yet senior leaders have not ensured that staff have sufficient opportunities to share the very best practice seen in the school or in other schools and so improve their own practice
- Performance management procedures are well embedded and training for staff is strongly aligned to targets for improvement. The headteacher leads on this and ensures that there is a clear link to pay progression. Staff very much appreciate and value the training and development opportunities they have.
- The curriculum is well organised for pupils, with an appropriate focus on developing pupils' basic skills. A good range of educational visits and visitors to the school enrich learning. Older pupils have the opportunity to participate in a residential visit and an impressive range of extra-curricular activities further enhance pupils' learning. Senior leaders are aware, however, that there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. There are very well established routines. Pupils respect the views of others and clearly feel safe to respond openly to challenging teachers' questions. This was clearly illustrated in the confident oral responses by pupils in a very successful singing lesson for the oldest pupils in the school.
- The new primary school sport funding is used well to provide additional activities for pupils. There is a clear plan for expenditure and pupils now benefit from opportunities to participate in a broad range of activities, including coaching in a variety sports and dance. They also have access to inter-school competitions. Pupils are encouraged to make the link between these activities and developing a healthy lifestyle.
- The school values the good light touch support it receives from the local authority, particularly the support for staff training.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have a good understanding of performance data because this is shared with them through the headteacher's report and a review of data. As a result, they support and challenge senior leaders and contribute to raising achievement. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching through their timetabled visits to the school and are aware of the link between teachers' pay and performance. They ensure that performance management systems are rigorously implemented. Governors have a good understanding of how the pupil premium funding and the additional sports funding are used and the positive impact these are having on pupils' progress. The governing body attends relevant training to improve its practice further. Financial management is secure and resources are managed effectively.

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	114277
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	440821

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Carter
Headteacher	Jane Lewin
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2011
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