

St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Moor

Hustledown, South Moor, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 6PH

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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' achievement has risen quickly since the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress from their often low starting points and achieve well to reach at least nationally expected standards by the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with complex needs make good progress. In individual cases, their personal development is outstanding.
- Pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium also make good progress.
- In the Reception class, children settle quickly and confidently to develop really positive attitudes to learning.
- Teaching is good because teachers constantly encourage pupils to 'aim high'. Effective support makes sure that potentially vulnerable pupils can all achieve well.
- High-quality care and support are provided in the happy, friendly school atmosphere.
- Behaviour is good and occasionally exemplary. Pupils of all ages are considerate, kind and keen to do well. Attendance is above average.
- The curriculum offers a broad and often rich range of interesting experiences from which pupils can learn. They develop wide interests, especially in sport.
- The headteacher is a quietly determined and effective leader who is well supported by the senior and middle leaders. All staff make sure that pupils have an equal chance to achieve success. All staff are committed to this view.
- The school enjoys the full confidence and trust of parents, who increasingly are involved in their children's learning and development.
- Senior leaders and governors work well as a team. Concerted action to improve teaching is having a positive impact in improving pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to produce a consistent pattern of rapid progress and high achievement.
- Opportunities are at times missed to demand more of pupils, stretch their thinking and offer clear steps for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, including five paired observations and work scrutiny carried out with headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and undertook learning walks around the school in order to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with pupils and had discussions with the headteacher, staff, parents, governors and the local authority education development adviser.
- The inspector examined a range of documents including those related to safeguarding, self-review, the monitoring of staff performance, the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors took account of 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 10 staff questionnaire responses.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British backgrounds. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- A much higher than average number of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual time.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is close to twice the average.
- Currently, over one half of the pupils are known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding which is much higher than average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and children from service families.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school provides a breakfast club each morning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding to ensure a pattern of rapid progress and high achievement by:
 - ensuring all groups of pupils are fully stretched and challenged to do their best
 - sharpening teachers' questioning skills in checking and extending pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - improving the marking of pupils' work so it includes clear guidance on how to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good and is rising steadily in all subjects across the school, as a result of the concerted efforts of senior leaders to improve teaching and learning.
- Most children start in the Reception class with skills much lower than those typical for their age, especially in speaking, listening, social and emotional skills. Children make good progress overall, although they make rapid progress in developing self-control and in learning to be independent. By the end of Reception Year, almost all children are much closer to the expected levels for their age in all areas of learning.
- Positive action taken to improve pupils' early reading and writing is paying dividends. Rates of progress in Years 1 and 2 are accelerating quickly, especially in writing. Current Year 2 pupils are on course to reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly average. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection and the 2013 test results.
- The pupils make good and sometimes faster progress in Years 3 to 6. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are typically average but are rising quickly. School information and inspection findings show that attainment in all subjects is on course to be above average by the end of the current Year 6.
- Improved teaching is resulting in an increasing number of most able pupils achieving highly. In all year groups, a proportion of pupils are exceeding expected levels for their age. In 2013 tests, a few Year 6 pupils achieved the highest level in mathematics. A similar proportion of the most able pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve the same high level in both writing and mathematics.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. In 2013, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were more than three terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Increasingly effective teaching and carefully targeted support are closing the attainment gaps quickly. Consequently, gaps are predicted to be close to being eliminated in all subjects by the end of the current year for pupils in Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least good progress, with a few better than this, because their needs are accurately and quickly pinpointed by staff. Good, and sometimes excellent, support from teachers and teaching assistants and external specialists help pupils to add to their skills and achieve their challenging targets.
- The few pupils from minority ethnic groups also make good progress. Those pupils who arrive part way through a key stage settle quickly and almost all make good progress.
- Standards in reading are rising strongly, because methods to teach children and younger pupils how to blend letters and sounds together to form words are increasingly successful. A large majority of pupils met the required standard in 2013 in the Year 1 screening check for reading. A whole-school drive is successfully fostering an interest and enjoyment of reading. Older pupils in Year 6 demonstrate reading skills which exceed those expected for their age. They are mature and fluent readers who are well informed about their favourite authors and reading themes.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. Previous weaknesses in teaching, particularly in the levels of challenge provided in Years 1 and 2, have been eradicated. Pupils usually undertake work with levels of challenge at the right level that are well tailored to their learning needs and abilities.
- For example, the increasingly imaginative use of topics to link subjects together in interesting ways, is leading to higher levels of pupil engagement and enthusiasm. A group of older pupils talked with much feeling when describing their work imagining what it must have been like to be a child evacuee in the Second World War.
- Learning and progress are quickest and achievement higher, for example, when pupils are clear what they need to do to add to their knowledge and understanding, undertake work that holds

their interest and can engage in problem-solving tasks that require pupils to justify their solutions.

- Progress is slower, for example, when pupils: are not able to develop their skills in different subjects; challenge is not at the right level; questioning fails check and extend their knowledge and understanding and when they receive too little written feedback in teachers' marking of their books on how to improve.
- When progress is fastest, questioning challenge pupils' thinking. For example, a group of pupils were captivated by the stories of the African sky god 'Nyame', 'he who knows and sees everything'. This led to impressive writing, comparing and retelling of stories. Very occasionally, the stimulating topics studied are not used well to extend pupils' thinking and understanding even more.
- In the Reception class, staff successfully encourage children to explore and investigate for themselves. Careful planning of what each child needs to learn next helps to move children's learning forward well, although opportunities to find things out for themselves are occasionally limited outdoors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. At times, older pupils display exemplary attitudes to each other and to their work, especially when teaching is at its best. Classrooms, social areas including in the breakfast club and playgrounds are friendly places to be. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements.
- The school is a very happy and safe environment. Pupils are extremely well cared for and looked after. Considerate and kind behaviour typifies the school day. All parents responding to Parent View agree.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of the different forms of bullying. In discussions, pupils comment that mean and unkind behaviour is infrequent. One pupil remarked that this is because 'we are taught to respect each other'. Pupils speak confidently about staff being on hand and responding promptly to any worries, anxieties or concerns they may have.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils observe that they are well looked after and taught how to recognise risk and avoid danger. 'Good to be green' is a behaviour management system which sets clear conduct boundaries and encourages pupils to be responsible and sensible. Pupils appreciate the meaningful rewards the system can bring for their good behaviour.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school and pride in their achievements are reflected in their much improved above-average attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher sets high expectations and a clear direction for the school's continued improvement. Strengths have been successfully added since the previous inspection. Middle managers are an increasingly dynamic and coherent team who are adding much impetus to the push for continued improvement.
- Teaching and learning are really well led. Robust systems are in place to help rigorously check school performance. Consequently, performance is judged accurately. A strong focus on the continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has resulted in significant advances in pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. Staff training is well tailored to school and staff priorities. Staff are held accountable for pupils' outcomes. A well-embedded performance management system for all staff firmly links salary progression to pupils' progress and achievement.
- The interesting and varied curriculum caters effectively for a broad range of abilities, talents and needs. Trips linked to topic work, themes and interesting visitors to the school provide

experiences that pupils remember and talk about enthusiastically. For example, when older pupils were recalling their experiences on their recent residential trip, they very quickly became excited and animated.

- The good, and sometimes excellent, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development supports pupils' personal development well. Staff display much determination ensuring that each pupil can achieve their full potential, regardless of their starting points or needs. Any form of discrimination is not tolerated.
- Good use is made of the school's primary sport funding. The specialist coaching and extra tuition in a broad range of sporting activity are effective. Participation rates are high and an increasing number of pupils are developing their skills to a much higher level. The award in 'Sport Leadership' helps to prepare older pupils really well for the future.
- The local authority has an accurate view of school performance and provides challenge, support and training expertise when required.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. Procedures and practice are well established, reflecting the school's strong commitment to pupils' high-quality care and support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely supportive of the school. The recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body leads by example, checking the impact of all that the school provides. Governors accurately judge school strengths and correctly identify priorities for improvement. This includes checking the quality of teaching and learning.
 - Effective training is adding to the confidence and skill of governors when checking school performance. They are increasingly challenging and ensure that performance management is properly embedded linking classroom performance to pay progression. Members frequently check the impact of pupil premium funding. They work very closely with senior leaders and make certain statutory requirements are met.

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	114247
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	430871

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	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Mulhearn
Headteacher	Joanne Sands
Date of previous school inspection	24 April 2012
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