

St Oswald's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Nash Avenue, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE34 8NS

Inspection dates 18–19 June 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.

- The impressive provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage allows the children to make good progress.
- The achievement of older pupils is now good across all subjects including writing, which in the past had been an area of concern.
- Achievement in mathematics is a strength of the school.
- Teaching is good and provides challenge for all groups of pupils because teachers plan work according to pupils' abilities.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their schoolwork are very positive. Pupils are well behaved, polite and friendly.
- The school works successfully to keep pupils safe and secure.
- The school is improving because school leaders, including the governing body, have put into place effective strategies, which have improved achievement and the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some marking does not give pupils sufficient guidance on how their work might be improved.
- Pupils are not always clear about the levels at which they are working.
- A small group of parents does not feel well informed about some management decisions the school has made.
- The targets to manage teachers' performance are not related to measuring the proportion of pupils who are making better-than-expected progress.

Information about this inspection

- All pupils in Year 4 and Year 6 were out of school on visits for the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors visited 15 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight different teachers. Two were paired observations with the assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about how much reading they do, as well as looking at their work in class.
- Pupils' work in books were scrutinised by inspectors, along with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher.
- Discussions took place with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents were examined, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's improvement plan, records of the school's checks on teaching and learning, as well as its own assessment data.
- The views of 37 parents, who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), were also taken into account as well as the school's own questionnaire, which surveyed 65 parents.
- The inspection team approached more than 20 parents before school to find out their views and five parents visited the inspectors to talk about their experiences about the school.
- One letter was received from a parent.
- Twenty-seven members of staff completed questionnaires about their views of the school.

Inspection team

Frank Cain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Waugh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Oswald's is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Almost all pupils are from White British communities.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school has had to manage some significant staffing changes recently.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching in order to raise standards further by:
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to improve their work after it has been marked
 - making sure that marking always helps pupils understand at which level they are working and precisely what they must do to move to the next level.
- Further improve leadership and management, including the management of teaching and learning, by:
 - giving teachers more challenging, but measurable performance targets in relation to pupils' progress
 - finding more ways to gain the support of those parents who do not feel well informed about some management decisions the school has made.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, their skills are below those typically expected for their age. Children's progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage because the good outdoor and indoor provision gives them space to explore and learn, guided by adults who encourage children to communicate well. The facilities for children to practise their writing skills, however, are better in the indoor area.
- Good verbal communication is encouraged from the Nursery class onwards. For example, three girls in Nursery were playing being in a restaurant. One acted out the role of a waitress and was serving drinks and food to other children. They made sure they were very polite and all said 'thank you' when they were served.
- Historically, Year 1 pupils made uneven progress from year to year, but now it is improving strongly. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, their attainment is broadly average in all subjects. This represents good progress over time from their starting points.
- The school has successfully prioritised pupils' writing as an area for development and as a result has improved the overall attainment of girls, which had been weaker than that of boys.
- Pupils make very good progress in mathematics, because they are presented with practical examples to explain complex ideas. Multiplication, for example, was introduced to Year 1 using egg cartons and lollipop moulds to help pupils understand the concept more effectively than just looking at columns and rows of information.
- Pupils are keen readers and are eager to show how well they are doing. In Year 2, the good training in the sounds that letters make (phonics) is evident by pupils confidently sounding out complex words. The school encourages pupils to read at home and one said that she reads to her brother at night after school. Older pupils choose challenging books as personal readers, and show confidence in their developing ability even when tackling new words.
- Pupils eligible for support by the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, are now making extremely good progress and the gap between them and other pupils in the school is negligible in reading and mathematics and equivalent to half a term in writing. This represents a considerable improvement over time. The pupil premium funding is used to employ extra teaching assistants and new resources.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they are supported well by their class teachers and teaching assistants.
- The most able pupils make good progress because they are given work that is challenging and well-adapted to their needs.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Information from assessing pupils' skills and knowledge is used well to ensure that activities are planned for pupils' different ability levels.
- Pupils in Year 4 talk confidently about how their work in writing is helping them to improve the quality of their written work across all subjects.
- Pupils feel they are making good progress working towards their National Curriculum target levels, but teachers' marking does not always help them to gauge how well they are doing in relation to these targets.
- Written advice in many books is at times exemplary. In Year 6, for example, pupils are advised to go back over their work to correct it. This is then checked meticulously by the class teacher to ensure that pupils are learning well. However, not all pupils across the school have the chance to improve their work so effectively.
- Teachers promote pupils' social and moral development well by encouraging them to work together and talk to each other about their ideas.

- Some parents are concerned about the number of changes in the school's staff but the inspection team found no evidence that this was having a negative impact on pupils' achievement.
- Inspection evidence found that good learning and progress are taking place in all key stages with some examples of outstanding practice.
- Class teachers use teaching assistants very well. They play an important part in the good progress that pupils, including those who sometimes find the work difficult, are making. They encourage pupils to work well and they often add extra challenge to pupils who might finish their work early.
- The most able are challenged in lessons because frequently, their work is extremely well adapted to their ability. For example, in both Years 1 and 3 the most able are not just given more to do, but are given work designed to make them think harder. In English in Year 1, pupils had to put words in alphabetic order, but the most able were given several words with the same first letter, so that sorting them was far more difficult.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils generally get down to work quickly without fuss. They are usually keen to learn and enjoy their lessons. They actively support each other to improve their work and overcome problems, in mathematics, for example.
- The attendance of pupils has improved and is now above average. The proportion of pupils absent for prolonged periods has reduced significantly.
- The school's behaviour policy is followed by all staff and good behaviour is taught and encouraged. In the Nursery class, for example, members of staff work closely with children, explaining sensitively why they needed to move on and help tidy up with the other children.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their work, and the presentation of their work in books is very good. The school premises are welcoming and looked after well. There is no litter and wall displays encourage pupils to work and behave well.
- Pupils are warm, welcoming and polite to each other and one even offered to share her packed lunch with a visiting inspector.
- Politeness is deep rooted in pupils. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage insisted on holding a door open for an inspector, even though they struggled with the weight of the door.
- In public areas, pupils move around sensibly and without fuss. Pupils are keen to help others and 'buddies' make sure that pupils are reminded of the high expectations in the school. As a result, they leave assembly in an orderly way. A Year 5 pupil, without adult supervision, was observed reminding Key Stage 1 pupils how they should behave in corridors. Giving pupils responsibility for their own behaviour is well developed across the school.
- A small number of parents indicated that they were concerned about bullying. Pupils, however, say that bullying is not an issue in school and that they all know to whom they can turn if they need help.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, including that linked to new technology, such as computers. The school has had an anti-bullying week to inform pupils of possible dangers and staff have been trained recently in what they should look out for to spot incidents of bullying.
- School records show very few incidents of poor behaviour and the school has no need to resort to exclusion.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel very safe in school, and this view is supported by an overwhelming number of parents.
- Records on vulnerable children are well kept and thorough and show exemplary practice.
- Suitable risk assessments are in place for residential and extra-curricular visits.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the governing body have made well-founded improvements to the school. Pupils' standards in writing, the attainment of girls, and in particular, the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium have improved significantly.
- The school's management of teaching and learning is good, because leaders provide support to all staff in the form of timely professional development, which spreads good practice across the school.
- The management of teachers' performance is good and school records show that the quality of teaching is improving. The school is keen to improve even further by giving teachers more specific, measurable targets, closely related to more pupils making more-than-expected progress.
- Leaders of key subject areas, such as literacy and numeracy, are involved in close checking on pupils' work and comparing their grading judgements with other local schools.
- All staff and the governing body share a common aim to improve not only pupils' academic performance but also their social and spiritual development. Pupils celebrate their own religion with pride, singing hymns, which they know by heart, with enthusiasm but they also learn about other religions and people from other areas and cultures.
- The curriculum is popular with pupils and very imaginative work is taking place. In a topic lesson related to the Egyptians, for example, pupils experimented with mummifying a dead fish. This lesson although, 'a bit smelly', as one said, will be remembered by pupils for years to come.
- Some parents express dissatisfaction with the quality and regularity of home-school communication and the school recognises that this is an area for improvement.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet current requirements.
- The primary school sports funding is used well to set up popular new activities for pupils, such as gymnastics and dance clubs, and in increasing staff skills by employing sports coaches. The school checks the quality and impact of the work of these coaches exceptionally well.
- The local authority has provided good support to help the school check how well it is performing. It also assists in training for newly-qualified teachers who, overall, feel very well supported by the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are aware of the quality of teaching and of how well pupils are doing, because they consider the 'Data Dashboard', which contains information about pupils' performance. They also scrutinise data provided by the school. They understand how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact of this spending on the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Governors challenge leaders with rigour and oversee performance management arrangements to ensure that staff only receive financial reward if they meet their classroom targets for pupils' progress.

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	108718
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	442210

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Frazer
Headteacher	Mrs M.B. Lightfoot
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2012
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