

St Catherine's RC Primary School

Greystoke Gardens, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE2 1PS

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Early years provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well. Disadvantaged pupils attain as well as others in the school and all pupils nationally. All are eager to learn and they work hard to please their teachers. Standards are rising year on year because learning is well planned and pupils are given good support to succeed.
- Teaching is good. Learning is extended by activities that are well matched to pupils' needs. Teaching assistants are trained well to help pupils of all abilities to become successful learners.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery. They are cared for very well and feel confident in the classroom. This helps them to explore and learn for themselves.
- Pupils' good, and sometimes excellent, behaviour around the school and in the playground makes this a warm and welcoming school. Pupils relish learning together in this rich, diverse community.
- Excellent pastoral care ensures that pupils feel safe and secure, including those who join after the start of the school year. Pupils say that staff take great care of them. Their parents agree that their children are cared for well.
- The new curriculum is well planned to give pupils opportunities to find out about things that interest them and the world around them. It fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. Pupils learn the importance of being tolerant of others' views and beliefs and have a clear understanding of the need to follow rules in modern British society.
- The headteacher has given a very good lead to improving the school since the previous inspection. His vision for excellence is supported well by all staff and governors. As a result, teaching and achievement have improved.
- Middle leaders have extended their role and show a firm commitment to continually improving the school.
- Governors are well informed about teaching and learning in the school and play a full part in its continuing improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Children do not make rapid progress in their literacy and numeracy skills in the Reception class.
- Progress in phonics (the sounds that letters make) is slowed for some pupils, because some groups are too large to allow teachers to target the correct level of learning for each pupil in the group.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, information about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school development plan.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work on display and in their exercise books, and listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors took account of 17 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the 16 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Deborah Wylie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average size primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funds for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average.
- Approximately half of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Asian, Asian British, Chinese, Black or Black British or Romany/Gypsy heritages. Over 50 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Early years provision is part time.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2014. These are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- A large proportion of pupils joins and leaves the school during the school year. This is above the national average and can account for a quarter of pupils in any year.
- After a long period of stability, the school had a high turnover in staffing at the start of this school year, when three new teachers were appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in phonics by the end of Year 2 by:
 - reviewing teaching groups for phonics to ensure that all groups of children from Reception to Year 2 are taught at the correct level to ensure the best possible progress from their starting points
 - updating training for staff who are new to the school.
- Accelerate children's progress in literacy and numeracy skills in the Reception class by:
 - providing further training and support for staff who are new to role in the early years so that they can assess children's needs accurately and plan suitably challenging tasks for individual children
 - providing small-group teaching in these subjects so that children's learning needs are targeted precisely.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's ambitions for an outstanding school and his determination to raise pupils' achievement even further have driven rapid improvement since the previous inspection. He has been supported well in this vision by the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders and by the school governing body. The quality of teaching has improved significantly, so too has pupils' achievement.
- The school assesses its effectiveness rigorously and accurately and identifies the correct priorities for further improvement. The detailed school development plan sets ambitious targets to achieve this.
- Rigorous systems to track pupils' progress have been introduced by the headteacher. These are understood well and used by staff to set pupils' progress targets. Regular progress meetings with senior staff ensure that any pupil at risk of falling behind is spotted quickly and supported to improve. These systems ensure that equal opportunities are promoted very well for all groups of pupils.
- The role of middle leaders has developed well since the previous inspection. They now play a full part in leading improvements and regularly increase the scope of their role by taking on additional responsibilities. This is helping to accelerate the school's improvement further. Staff morale is high and all are eager to contribute to further improvement.
- The management of teachers' performance is robust. The school makes good use of staff expertise to raise the quality of teaching through, for example, team teaching and coaching in mathematics. Staff are also supported to meet their performance targets through regular training to support the school's priorities. There is a clear link, which is fully understood by governors, between teachers' performance and their salary progression.
- The well-planned curriculum fosters pupils' interests and talents and develops a genuine love of learning. The school makes good use of its diverse mix of ethnicity and languages to teach pupils about the need for tolerance and respect for difference in modern British society. Parents are well informed about their child's curriculum through the school's informative website.
- The school uses primary sport funding well to promote active lifestyles and physical well-being by taking part in the local initiative to share expertise and develop inter-school competitive games. Increased uptake of after-school clubs, coaching for teachers in gymnastics and dance, and cookery clubs to promote healthy eating all contribute to the growing involvement of pupils in physical activities.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support disadvantaged pupils. The school has appointed a pupil premium champion whose role is specifically to monitor the progress of this group of pupils. The champion helps ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress and attain as well as others do. Published data show that there is no difference between the attainment of these pupils and others in the school, or of all pupils nationally.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet requirements.
- Parents who completed the online questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- The local authority and the local diocese have both made a strong contribution to the school's rapid development since the previous inspection. The impact of this support on the role of middle leaders and on the quality of teaching has been significant.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very well informed about the school's performance as a result of their regular monitoring of its work. They show good understanding of what needs to improve further because they have undergone training to improve their understanding of school performance data. Governors have supported good improvements to teaching by holding teachers rigorously to account for the progress their pupils make, only rewarding those who fully meet their targets. Finances are managed well so that there are good levels of staffing and resources to support pupils' learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are caring and welcoming to the many new entrants who join the school after the start of the year. Pupils learn much about the need for tolerance of different beliefs and ways of life. This helps them to develop good relationships and to appreciate the need for understanding and support in class and the playground. The calm, harmonious atmosphere that pervades the school is rooted in this learning.

- Behaviour is managed well because pupils follow the rules and the excellent example set by adults in their relationships with one another. School records show that exclusions are rare and that good behaviour is typical over time. Parents overwhelmingly agree that behaviour in the school is good.
- Pupils' enjoyment of learning and their determination to do well ensure that time is used well in lessons. In many lessons from Year 2 to Year 6 pupils show excellent attitudes to learning, because learning is fast paced and challenging. In all lessons pupils move smoothly from one activity to another, because they know that the routines help them to learn and that teachers have high expectations of how hard they will work.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are taught well to assess risks to their well-being. They understand the potential dangers of the Internet and social media and how to respond in order to stay safe.
- Pupils are taught to assess their own behaviour and that of others, so that they recognise bullying if it does occur. Pupils are adamant that bullying hardly ever happens, but that playground games can 'sometimes end in name-calling, but that's not bullying'. They have a mature and balanced view of the behaviour of others and try hard to see it for what it is before miss-naming it as bullying.
- Staff know pupils very well and they are alert to any changes in their learning or behaviour, so that if these occur they are picked up quickly and additional support provided. Excellent care creates a very happy secure school, where every pupil feels known and valued.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. This is because senior leaders have provided high quality professional training, with the support of the local authority and the diocese, to extend the skills of teachers and teaching assistants. Teaching increasingly promotes outstanding learning over time in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' work is monitored well by teachers and this gives them a good picture of what different groups of pupils need to learn next. Activities are planned to allow pupils of all abilities to develop their confidence in learning and the belief that if they work hard they will succeed.
- In many classes pupils are now assessing their own work and that of other pupils. This is developing their ability to spot for themselves where improvement can be made. Pupils in Year 4 helped each other to improve their writing of non-chronological reports, working at a good rate in response to advice.
- Improvements to marking and feedback on pupils' work are becoming well established. Pupils are trained well to look for positive comments on what they can do well and for pink highlighter which tells them 'exactly where to improve'. Pupils can see that this simple system 'helps us to reach our goals and work harder'.
- Good questioning helped pupils of all abilities in Year 6 to write about a letter of St Paul's. This allowed pupils to consider in depth how St Paul's advice might be interpreted to guide people to care for others in their daily lives. Pupils' mature writing showed how well they could explain their viewpoint and give examples of how to live out your beliefs in practice.
- Year 5 pupils made rapid progress in solving mathematical problems because they were constantly challenged to explain their reasoning. Close checks on the progress of all pupils were very helpful in allowing staff to spot where a pupil was having difficulty or did not fully understand the problem. This made sure that every pupil made at least good progress and thoroughly enjoyed the lesson because they were successful.
- The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is very effective when the groups are made up of pupils at a similar level of knowledge and skill. This was seen clearly in a Year 2 lesson where the most-able pupils worked at a blistering pace to blend and write words which contain silent letters. This pace is not evident in some groups because they include pupils with too wide a range of different stages of learning. The school has identified this weakness in the current year and is reviewing group sizes.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The performance of Year 6 pupils in English and mathematics was at the national average in 2014. This represents significant improvement on the previous year's results, underlining the school's recovery from a dip in performance in 2013. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on target to reach similar standards, thereby

securing the school's pattern of rising attainment at the end of Key Stage 2.

- Pupils' progress by the end of Year 6 was in line with national averages in 2014. This represents good progress from their starting points when they joined the school. The school has effective strategies for supporting the high proportion of pupils who join the school after the usual starting time, to settle in and make friends. These pupils are monitored carefully, so that over time they make similar progress to that of other pupils, including those who have little English when they join the school.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils who reached the expected standard in phonics (the sounds that letters make) dipped in 2014 to below the national average. This was partly linked to pupils who started the school after Reception. However, the school also acknowledges that the dip was partly due to the composition of some teaching groups. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards in line with the national average and have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their individual starting points.
- Reading skills are developed from an early age. Those who do not reach the expected standard by the end of Year 1 are supported well to catch up by the end of Year 2. Reading skills then develop rapidly in Key Stage 2 where frequent reading opportunities for independent and supported reading allow pupils to accelerate at their own best rate. Older pupils are enthusiastic readers, who confidently use their skills for research in topic work, as well as reading for pleasure.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is increasing rapidly in the current year. New approaches have captured pupils' enthusiasm for problem-solving and explaining the methods they use. In all classes pupils are focused very well on understanding the links between different elements in their calculations, so that they work accurately and with good levels of confidence. Many Year 6 pupils claimed mathematics as their favourite subject, 'because it makes you think'.
- Frequent opportunities for writing, including in religious education and in topic work, drive the good standards in writing across the school. From Year 1 pupils develop the skills to write independently and express their ideas clearly. By Year 6 there are some striking examples of high quality writing, especially from the most-able pupils who are challenged well by staff in all classes to do their best.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are supported well to make progress similar to that of their peers. Teaching assistants are well trained, use effective programmes to support pupils to reach the level expected for their age and make similar progress to that of their peers.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress in their acquisition of English. School and published data show that the achievement of these pupils meets, and often exceeds, that of others in the school.
- The most-able pupils are challenged well to attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics, because teachers monitor their progress carefully. In national tests in 2014, these pupils performed as well as the most able nationally in reading and writing. Girls exceeded the national average for the higher level in mathematics, while boys were below this level. Changes to the teaching of mathematics have seen boys' performance at the higher level improve in the current school year.
- Disadvantaged pupils also make good progress. Pupil premium funds have been used well to close the gaps in both attainment and in progress between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils is equal to all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years provision

is good

- Children join Nursery with skills that are below what is typical for their age. Every year a number join with English as an additional language or delayed speech and language. All children make good progress from their starting points, especially in developing the confidence to learn independently. The proportion achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception is increasing year on year; it was above the national average in 2014. Children are ready to start Year 1.
- The learning environment is planned to provide interesting experiences in all areas of learning indoors and out. Teaching is good overall. Adults work alongside children effectively to help them develop their ideas and follow their interests. Planned small-group teaching is not as well developed as other provision. Children's literacy and numeracy skills are not as well developed as they might be in Reception, because some planned activities are not linked sufficiently closely to direct teaching.
- Good leadership ensures a warm, nurturing environment where children make positive relationships with adults and each other, so they behave well and learn to work together. Rigorous systems to assess risks keep children safe and secure, so they are able to explore the environment safely and learn by themselves.
- The early years leader has introduced new systems for observing and assessing children's learning in

order to improve planning for further improvement. These are in the early stages of development and new staff have not yet been trained in how to use them to full effect. Training for new staff is in hand to help these systems embed and have a full impact on children's learning.

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

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| Unique reference number | 108507 |
| Local authority | Newcastle Upon Tyne |
| Inspection number | 453590 |

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

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| 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 | 214 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | J Hastie |
| Headteacher | M Ewing |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 March 2013 |
| Telephone number | 0191 2326803 |
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