

Northern Saints CE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Rotherham Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR5 5QL

Inspection dates

27–28 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- From below average starting points pupils in Year 6 reach standards that are typical for pupils of their age in English and mathematics and so pupils' achievement is good.
- Teaching is good in the school. Teachers plan lessons which capture the interest of pupils well.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school because they want to do their best. Attendance is improving.
- The school is a secure environment in which to learn and pupils say that they feel very safe.
- The early years provision is a very well led and effective part of the school where children thrive.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Traditional British values are developed through much of what pupils do in the school.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and the Governing Body have skilfully guided this new school through its first year, bringing two different schools together to create a welcoming and happy community.
- Close attention to detail and a sharp focus on teaching and pupils' achievement have meant that both have improved.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is good or better. Pupils are not always given work that is hard enough or easy enough, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Not all teachers insist on the same standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects.
- Not all teachers follow the school's procedures for marking and feedback.
- The school's overall attendance figure has not yet reached the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school. They also observed pupils at work during short visits to classrooms. Two observations were jointly carried out with the headteacher and deputy head teacher. Inspectors also listened to pupils read in Years 2 and 6.
- Inspectors considered 57 responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 28 questionnaires completed by the staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils in Year 6 and the school council. They also talked informally with pupils at break times and lunchtimes. They talked to the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors and had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors also held meetings with a representative from a neighbouring local authority (which is supporting the school) and leaders within the school including the leaders of the early years provision, the language resource centre, the special educational needs coordinator and leaders at middle level.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a range of documentation, including information relating to pupils' progress, their books, school improvement planning and the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance. They also considered reports written by the local authority, reports written by the neighbouring local authority, documents relating to the management of teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding and child protection documents.

Inspection team

Peter Evea, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne Vernon	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a new school formed from the amalgamation of two different schools. The school opened in September 2013. It is a much larger than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium is much higher than average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Children attend the Reception class on a full time basis.
- There is a specially resourced provision for pupils who have speech, language and communication needs. The language resource centre has nine pupils currently on roll from across the local authority. It operates for four days each week and on the other day pupils attend their home school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to work with parents to improve pupils' attendance still further.
- Improve teaching further so that it is outstanding overall by:
 - making sure that teachers, especially in Key stage 1, use the information they have about pupils' progress to plan work that is of an appropriate level of difficulty
 - ensuring that all teachers insist on the same high standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects
 - making sure that all teachers consistently follow the school's procedures for marking and feedback.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are good

- The school is well led by a highly effective headteacher supported by determined and equally effective senior leaders. Middle leaders and a committed and ambitious governing body also play an important role in driving school improvement.
- The headteacher and governors have guided the school well from its opening and have successfully brought together two different schools to create a harmonious school community which, despite its large size, manages to know and value all its members.
- The school has effective systems and procedures in place to monitor all its work and leaders use the wealth of information to create plans for further improvement. Leaders at all levels and governors play an important part in creating these plans and monitoring their progress. Much has been done to work with parents to improve pupils' attendance, but the overall figure remains just below the national average.
- The headteacher and senior leaders carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning and have an accurate view of its good quality and where it needs to improve. Middle leaders are playing an increasing role in this process. Where improvements are needed, leaders provide coaching and effective professional development which help teachers to develop their skills further. The link between teachers' performance and pupils' progress and the pay and promotion of staff are clear.
- Equality of opportunity is central to all that the school does. The school works hard to foster good relations, tackle discrimination, and to remove any barriers to learning and make sure that all pupils have the same opportunities to do their best. As a result, gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are narrowing.
- Pupils have extensive opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through a varied and exciting curriculum, which prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. They develop a good knowledge of the cultures in other countries and different faiths. Their good behaviour and ability to learn in a range of different groups testify to their moral and social development.
- The primary school sport funding has been used effectively to extend the range of sports available. For example, pupils say how much they enjoy the opportunity to learn street dance and to attend the outdoors adventure residential visit. It has also been used to enhance the quality of the teaching of physical education and to allow more pupils to take part in competitive sports. This is playing an important role in improving the physical well-being of pupils.
- The school is a safe and caring environment where safeguarding practices meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority has provided appreciated light touch support to the school. The school also pays for support from a larger neighbouring local authority and this support has contributed to improvements to the overall effectiveness of this new school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors keep themselves well informed about all aspects of school life, especially about the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching. They have undertaken training in understanding achievement information and use their skills and knowledge to ask challenging questions to hold leaders at all levels to account. They share the same ambitions as the headteacher and all the staff to make the school as good as it can possibly be for its pupils. Governors also use this knowledge to reward good teaching. They oversee the performance management of staff and ensure that challenging targets are set for all staff. Successful action has been taken in the past to tackle underperformance and as a result teaching has improved. Governors ensure that resources such as the pupil premium and primary sports funding are used effectively to narrow gaps in attainment and improve pupils' physical well-being and they have a good understanding of the effect these funds have on different groups of pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well around the school and at break and lunchtimes. They are very polite and welcoming at all times and show high levels of mutual respect to each other and to adults.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Social skills are well taught and so pupils are able to work in a range of situations. Teachers actively develop pupils' independence and so they can work very effectively

on their own and in small groups.

- There is an active school council and pupils have opportunities to be involved in improving their school. For example, Year 6 pupils have been very involved in developing the school's outdoor learning environment. Pupils have a range of responsibilities such as head boy and head girl and the reptile rangers are conscientious and knowledgeable about the care of the snakes and geckoes in the school's reptile room.
- There have been very few fixed-term exclusions since the school opened. The school is skilled at supporting those pupils who are vulnerable and these pupils are supported and managed very well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe and parents agree that their children are safe and happy in this inclusive and tolerant school community.
- Attendance has improved and is now almost at the national average. However, a number of pupils take holidays during term time and too many do not attend regularly enough.
- Pupils say bullying is rare. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and are very confident that when it occurs it is swiftly and dealt with effectively.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, for example, on the internet and when near fires.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good. It is often stronger in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Teachers are enthusiastic and regularly inspire pupils to learn. Pupils said, 'Teachers are brilliant'.
- Teachers often plan interesting activities set in real-life contexts and this helps pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- Classrooms are very well organised and pupils regularly use their increasing independence to organise themselves and get the resources they need. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and these are shared by the overwhelming majority of pupils.
- The teaching of reading is successful and pupils become enthusiastic and competent readers as they move through the school. Pupils benefit from guided reading sessions and the regular planned opportunities to read during the school day. They talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors. The school's partnership with a nearby organisation dedicated to supporting the growth of reading in the region has played an important part in developing confident keen readers in the school and in helping parents to support their child's reading.
- The teaching of mathematics is good, especially when learning is placed in a context related to the pupils' topic work. For example, pupils produced some work of an impressive quality when they used their mathematical skills to calculate areas and volumes in relation to Mayan pyramids.
- Pupils are given opportunities to write at length and do so with greater accuracy, adjusting their style to suit different audiences, as they move through the school. Each class has a portfolio of outstanding work and these contain numerous examples of high quality writing. Other examples are found on display throughout the school.
- Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to learning. They are involved in planning and the daily 'buzz' sessions where staff gathers to discuss and review the day's learning and to plan for the next day, keep them very much involved. They know the pupils and their needs well and so can intervene effectively to support their learning.
- Most teachers plan lessons based on their knowledge of pupils' progress and activities are pitched at the right level. However, this does not always happen, especially in Key Stage 1 and so the progress of some pupils is slower than it should be.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and some marking and feedback is of a high standard. Not all teachers though consistently follow the school's agreed systems for marking and feedback. In some classes, comments do not lead to improvements nor do teachers ensure pupils make the improvements suggested.
- Although pupils are encouraged to learn spellings and to use the correct punctuation and grammar in some lessons and subjects, not all teachers insist on the same high standards in all subjects.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with the skills and knowledge that are mostly just below those that are typical for their age. They make good progress to reach broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils make good progress overall from often just below and sometimes significantly below starting points. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make rapid progress with many making more progress than is expected of them and a number attaining the highest Level 6 in mathematics. Progress in Years 1 to 4 is good but not as rapid as it is in upper Key Stage 2 because some pupils are not given work that is hard enough.
- Pupils read well and they say that they read regularly at home as well as in school. A pleasing number make good use of the local library and all understand the importance of becoming good readers.
- Achievement in mathematics is good. Pupils not only use their skills in mathematics lessons but also in other subjects and in real-life situations. Year 6 pupils, for example, needed to be mathematically astute in planning how to use a significant budget to develop the outdoors learning environment.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. While they write well and often at length, the standard of punctuation, grammar and particularly the accuracy in spelling, are not as high when pupils write in topic work as they are in literacy work.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 disadvantaged pupils were approximately two terms behind other pupils in the school in mathematics and reading and one and a half terms behind in writing. They were approximately one term behind other pupils nationally in mathematics and reading and one and a half terms behind in writing. The gaps in attainment are rapidly closing because these pupils make very good progress.
- The most able pupils are challenged and supported well, particularly in Key Stage 2, and as a result make good progress with six pupils attaining the highest Level 6 in mathematics. The school confidently predicts that a similar number will attain the same high standards in mathematics and in reading at the end of this academic year.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, including those in the language resource centre, are accurately identified and supported well by skilled and highly effective staff who know their needs well. As a result, these pupils also make good and sometimes very good progress, often from significantly below typical starting points.

The early years provision is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are just below those typical for their age. A number join with skills significantly below this because they have special educational needs. A small proportion join with skills and knowledge that are above that typical for their age. Children make good progress in the early years. Early assessments of children's starting points are now much more timely and accurate. As a result, a much larger proportion are confidently predicted to reach a good level of development and be ready for learning in Year 1 than was the case in the last academic year. The school's data indicates that an above average proportion are securely on track to reach a good level of development.
- Determined and very effective leadership in the early years has resulted in the creation of a unified team who all share the same passion and ambition for what they do. The leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and are quick to take action when it is needed. Improvements to assessment and to the outdoor area have resulted in improvements in children's achievement.
- Teachers and other staff plan exciting activities which capture children's interests. For example, they responded to some boys' interest in cars by creating a role play garage in the outdoor area where children enthusiastically created and played out their own stories. The daily 'buzz' meetings ensure that all have a clear picture of where to direct their efforts and leaders make very good use of all the team.
- Transition arrangements and the strong partnership which is developing with the local nursery means that children settle in quickly and well. They become happy and inquisitive learners who love to talk about their learning and their achievements. Behaviour is good and children cooperate and play happily together. Safety is important to everyone and the generous staffing means that adult supervision is of a high order and there are effective arrangements for the start and end of the school day.
- The early years works well with parents, who feel welcome and appreciate the numerous opportunities to

become involved in their child'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

Unique reference number	139425
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	447802

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	501
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Hodgson
Headteacher	Steve Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0191 553 5580
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