

St Francis Church of England Aided Junior School

Scholars Path, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 7HB

Inspection dates 15–16 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- In this welcoming school, the behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils feel extremely safe in school and have high regard for the feelings of others.
- Pupils settle quickly into learning because of the strong care and support they are given to address their individual needs.
- Progress is at least good for all groups of pupils from their entry to Year 3. By the end of Year 6 standards in all subjects are above average over time.
- Pupils engage extremely well with their learning. They enjoy school, are eager to please and make thoughtful responses to questions.
- Teaching is at least good. Some teaching is outstanding. Teachers and their assistants are constantly challenged to improve the quality of their work. They work together to make a highly successfully team.
- Marking is a strength of the school. Pupils understand the process and are fully engaged in opportunities to return to work and learn through correcting past errors or by improving the quality of their writing.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher and her senior leaders are central to school development. Work to develop the roles of all leaders has resulted in a greater shared responsibility ensuring that actions identified for improvement are successful.
- Leaders ensure that the quality of teaching is high through a system of lesson observations, staff training and the tracking of individual pupils' progress with staff pay related to pupils' performance.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school and its pupils. They recognise the need to develop pupils' skills and abilities beyond the academic. They ensure support for families so that pupils can make the best of the learning opportunities on offer. Governors are unafraid to challenge where appropriate and ensure that the allocation of finances is well directed for best impact.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The achievement of boys is not yet as good as girls in reading and writing.
- Progress in mathematics is slower than that in reading and writing. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in other subjects.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school, and nationally is too variable.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 6 lessons and learning sessions and listened to pupils' reading. The headteacher and deputy headteacher each took part in a joint observation with the inspector.
- Separate discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The opinions of 16 members of staff were also considered from their questionnaire responses.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at children's learning journals, staff planning journals, data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation and information relating to the welfare of children and safeguarding.
- Account was taken of the 10 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the results of the school's most recent questionnaire to parents.
- The inspector observed pupils during morning playtime and lunchtime and attended two whole-school assemblies for collective worship.

Inspection team

Kate Pringle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small junior school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are supported through the pupil premium funding, is well above average. This additional funding is allocated to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils looked after by the local authority care.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the governments' current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school other than at the usual time is higher than average.
- The school runs a breakfast club each morning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the achievement of all pupils by ensuring that:
 - boys make similar progress to girls in order to match their attainment
 - the gap between those pupils who are disadvantaged and others in the school continues to narrow
 - progress in mathematics across the school is similar to that made in reading and writing and more opportunities are provided to use mathematics in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The excellent team spirit found in this school underpins all aspects of its development. Close and positive working relationships and practical support between staff ensure that morale remains high.
- The headteacher and senior leaders form a strong partnership which is highly focused upon providing learning opportunities which will make a difference to the lives of its pupils. They promote the development of other leaders within the school who are capable trainers of their individual areas of responsibility.
- Leaders and managers recognise the strengths of the school and are quick to identify areas for action. There is constant focus to ensure high quality teaching. Because teaching assistants join teachers in training for teaching, there is a consistency of approach. Such focused training increases knowledge and skills and has a good impact upon outcomes, seen most recently in the development of pupils' reading comprehension. Regular monitoring of learning ensures that teaching staff are constantly aware of the drive towards excellence with a result that pupils' achievements are rising.
- Teachers recognise how well pupils are learning. They use the pupil progress tracking system to identify underachievement and rapidly put in place the necessary support to secure better individual performance.
- All pupils are included in every aspect of school life. There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities and providing opportunities for all to be 'the best one can be'. Every effort is made to ensure there is no discrimination. This is reflected in the enjoyment of pupils as they work and play happily together accepting each other's differences.
- Pupil premium funding has been used to support learning by reducing class sizes. It has also provided additional support for the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), music tuition and additional activities for pupils to widen their experiences. This is now helping to reduce the gap between the performance of these pupils and others in the school.
- The primary school sports fund is used to engage sports specialists who train staff in teaching physical education. They have developed the skills of the staff so that there is a greater range of sports on offer and pupils' performance has been enhanced. This has resulted in the much improved performance of the school teams in local competitions.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the school is outstanding. Strong links between Christian values and respecting the rights of individuals enable pupils to understand what constitutes a good citizen. Pupils celebrate individual talents and work together in harmony. The school regularly welcomes a range of visitors, and pupils' understanding of the wider world is extended through a variety of visits. Links with a school in Bangladesh provide opportunities for pupils to understand the similarities and differences between their lives and children in that country.
- The curriculum is broad and the school holds a number of awards which celebrate pupils' success in different skills. Learning through different topics means that pupils understand how subjects interact. The use of thinking skills and philosophy provide great opportunities for pupils to consider and reflect upon different situations. Pupils are well supported for their future life in a modern Britain and their move to the next stage of their education.
- The local authority provides a light touch in this good school in which the strengths of leaders and managers are recognised. Links with other local schools within the town cluster are positive and contribute to development.
- Leaders make sure that all staff are extremely well trained in all aspects of children protection so that safeguarding procedures go well beyond the set requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide effective support and challenge to the school because they work closely with the headteacher and senior leaders. They have a good grasp of how to evaluate data about the school's performance and compare it to other schools nationally.
 - Recognising the strengths of the school, they use information to determine where actions are needed to further improvement. They monitor the quality of teaching and its impact upon pupils' performance. They challenge school leaders to secure best performance.
 - Governors oversee the spending of identified pots of money and ensure that pupils learn well as a result of this. They recognise, particularly, work to support reading over the present year and how pupils and staff are benefitting from the sports money to improve performance.
 - Governors monitor the staff appraisal system to check on the performance of staff and hold the headteacher to account. They recognise the quality of teaching within the school and are well prepared

to tackle underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are extremely polite and well mannered. The relationships between pupils and all members of the school community are excellent. As a result, this is a warm and welcoming school where there is a highly positive ethos of 'everyone matters'.
- Pupils wholly appreciate their school and their teachers. They have excellent attitudes to learning and there are high levels of co-operation between pupils. Many take on responsibilities through the school council, act as buddies and older pupils support the reading of younger pupils.
- The consistent use of the behaviour policy and the 'card' system ensures that pupils know what is expected of them. They are aware of what constitutes right and wrong and learn to have a healthy regard for their rights and the rights of others. Pupils understand that their actions, or the actions of others, can have consequences which have the potential to cause harm to their peers.
- Pupils say that poor behaviour and bullying is rare in this school. They understand the different forms that bullying can take and are taught how to deal with these. Pupils know that very occasionally there can be some misbehaviour but that teachers intervene and resolve matters very quickly.
- The majority of parents believe that behaviour is good however half of parents on Parent View believed that bullying was a concern. Through discussions with pupils and documented school records, inspection evidence showed that this view of bullying was not upheld. It is clear that on the rare occasions that bullying does take place, staff are quick to intervene and successfully address concerns.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff know their pupils well and recognise quickly when they have concerns both in and out of school. They care for pupils extremely well, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. A range of effective measures support those pupils encountering difficulties. In particular, the work of the social learning mentor is a highly positive link between school and home to ensure that pupils are safe and secure.
- Attendance is now in line with the national average. The school provides a range of rewards for good attendance and pupils are responding well to these. The well-attended breakfast club enables a good proportion of pupils to be ready for the start of day. The school works hard with pupils and their families whose attendance is less than it should be and there is good evidence of excellent improvement in the attendance of these individual pupils.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and the vast majority of parents agree with them. The school curriculum is planned very effectively to give pupils many opportunities to recognise dangerous situations, for example when using the internet, and to make sensible choices, taking responsibility for their own safety.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils speak enthusiastically about their school and learning. They have excellent relationships with all staff as they endeavour to work hard. Pupils recognise that teachers want them to be 'the best that they can be'. Teachers have high expectations and pupils settle quickly to work and rise to new challenges. Pupils learn to persevere when tackling new skills as teachers use a number of strategies to support those who find learning difficult.
- Working as a team, teachers have similar high expectations for their pupils. They happily share their subject knowledge and expertise. Because of this, the approach to learning is consistent and pupils work very successfully within the understood parameters.
- Teachers quickly recognise when pupils fall behind or are encountering problems in learning. A range of different learning strategies are implemented to best fit the needs of individual pupils. Progress is tracked rigorously to ensure that the intervention is effective and pupils make progress.
- In lessons, teachers recognise when pupils understand and 'can do' or when they struggle. They are vigilant to maintain a constant watch for who needs to move to a different group or pairing with another pupil. This ensures that there is a good match of task to learning and has a good impact upon the quality of progress individual pupils make.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and provide high levels of support. They receive the same

training as teachers whenever possible taking on the responsibilities for different aspects of learning and the progression different groups of pupils.

- The quality of teaching in mathematics has risen in line with the new expectations for different age groups. More opportunities exist for pupils to use their mental agility through quick fire question and answer sessions and to use their developing skills to investigate and solve problems.
- Changes to the teaching of reading and the raised concentration upon understanding what is being read has had good impact across all subjects. This was ably demonstrated in a Year 3/4 class when pupils used their skills in comprehension to correctly sequence a series of events from their class reading book about an adventure in Egyptian times.
- Writing is a real strength of the school and pupils have ample opportunities to write at length. They are encouraged to consider how best to improve the quality of their work by extending vocabulary and the choice of phrases. In a Year 5/6 class, for example, pupils considered an extract from a story where the characters were talking in order to improve the descriptive quality of the scene. Through discussion they considered how the characters in the story felt, relating this to their own experiences. Ably led by the teacher, they collected a number of words to reflect different emotions before using these to write a passage in their own words.
- There are considerable opportunities for pupils to use their reading and writing skills in other subjects. Opportunities to use mathematics in this way are more limited.
- Marking is used consistently well across the school. Pupils understand the process and develop independent learning skills because they are given opportunities to return and reflect upon their last work.
- Pupils are proud of their work. They learn to write with a joined script from Year 3 onward, and the focus upon good standards of presentation in writing and across other subjects has been effective.
- Parents believe that teaching is good and that their children progress well. This view is supported by the inspection findings.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points and leave Year 6 with standards that are at least average but generally above what might be expected.
- The dip in reading in 2014 adversely affected overall outcomes and there has been immediate response by leaders to identify the problems and address these successfully. Assessment is secure and well moderated.
- The most recent spring assessments for Year 6 indicate that attainment is already matching national averages in all subjects. Present progress in reading and writing is outstanding and is good in mathematics. This evidence from data is supported by the progress shown in Year 6 books over time.
- There has been concentrated effort to secure best progress in reading and writing. Although standards continue to rise for boys and girls, especially in reading over the past year, the performance of boys remains lower than that of girls because their progress is not as rapid. The school recognises the improvements over the past year and continues to develop strategies to engage boys more fully, especially in reading.
- Progress in mathematics across the school is generally lower than the progress made in reading and writing. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use mathematics across different subjects and so practise their skills and gain confidence in the mathematical processes they have learnt.
- In 2014, compared to other pupils in Year 6, disadvantaged pupils were working a term behind in reading and writing and two terms behind in mathematics. Spring assessments for the present Year 6 indicate that the gap has reduced to a term behind in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Using the spring assessments compared to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally the gap for disadvantaged pupils has also narrowed. In the national tests for 2014, in reading and mathematics, they were a year behind and in writing a term above national averages. Present attainment is a term behind in all subjects. Progress for disadvantaged pupils is also about a term behind other pupils nationally.
- Although recent indications are that the gap is narrowing successfully between disadvantaged pupils and others, it is not yet consistent over time. The current rate of progress for these pupils indicates that this gap will be reduced further.
- There are small proportions of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs. They are very well supported because their needs are identified early and staff respond quickly to provide necessary support. These pupils make good progress in line with others in the school.
- The most able pupils make at least good progress and many make outstanding progress from their starting points in all subjects. This is because teaching provides them with a good level of challenge. The proportion achieving at the higher levels by the end of Year 6 is increasing and currently more pupils are

working at Level 5 with some working at Level 6.

- A proportion of pupils enter school at times other than usual. The needs of these individual pupils are quickly identified and supported. As a result these pupils quickly make up lost ground and make good and better progress.
- The reasons for the dip in reading in 2014 has been carefully investigated and the school has responded through a number of different strategies including smaller classes, additional support for phonics (the sounds individual letters and groups of letters make) and a focus upon understanding of what is being read. This is impacting not only upon improved reading standards but is improving understanding in problems set for pupils in mathematics.
- There are increased opportunities for pupils to read at home to parents, to staff and to friends. Pupils value books and talk of their enjoyment of reading a range of fiction and how they learn from factual books. Less able readers correctly sound out different letters and sounds for new words that they encounter and are able to relate what has happened and what may happen next. The best readers read with good fluency and comprehension. They correct their own voice to reflect different characters or situations.

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	114267
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	461686

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bowes
Headteacher	Jane Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2012
Telephone number	01325 300236
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