

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST. AGNES' R C PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Crawcrook, Ryton

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108390

Headteacher: June McKenna

Reporting inspector: Jean Morley  
25470

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2001

Inspection number: 195481

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Main Street Crawcrook Ryton Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE40 4NF
Telephone number:	0191 4132184
Fax number:	0191 4132194
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs N Dixon
Date of previous inspection:	December 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is situated in Crawcrook, from where the majority of its pupils come. With 116 pupils on roll, it is smaller than average in size. Pupils attend full time from age four to eleven. Almost all pupils are white and there are none for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs and the proportion eligible for free school meals are both below the national average. Socio-economic conditions are broadly average. So too, is the attainment of children as they enter the reception class. It is of note, however, that personal and social skills are relatively weak, mathematical skills relatively strong, while language skills are broadly in line with those in other schools in the local authority.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

St Agnes School is a really special school. The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational, and a key to the school's success: by her own example, she encourages all who work and learn in the school to produce their best. She has a clear vision for the school, and constantly pursues perfection whilst acknowledging that there will always be more to do. By the time they leave the school at age 11, pupils achieve standards in all core subjects that are in the top five per cent nationally and are well above those of similar schools. Pupils in all classes are eager to learn. They have a mature and responsible attitude to their work and behave very well both in and out of the classroom. Their thoughtfulness and consideration shine. The quality of all the teaching in the school is good or better. When all these features are taken into consideration, the school provides very good value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are in the top 5 per cent nationally. In particular, the school develops pupils' writing skills extremely well.
- The school is outstandingly well led and managed by the headteacher. Her pursuit of excellence is infectious and, as a result, is shared by all the staff and demonstrated in the quality of their work.
- Pupils are eager to learn. They relate really well to each other and to their teachers. Their thoughtfulness for others shines through their behaviour.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

- There are no key issues: the school is successful in all it undertakes, whilst constantly pursuing still further improvement.

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Progress since the last inspection, (December 1996) has been very good. The school has worked hard and successfully to address the key issues raised in the last report. With the exception of good standards in geography, history and science at the end of Key Stage 2, that inspection judged standards to be sound in all subjects. Now, standards are very high in English, mathematics and in science. It is not possible to make entirely secure judgements on all other subjects on an individual basis. However, the quality of pupils' work - in their books, in displays and in the lessons observed - strongly suggests that standards are at least good overall.

## STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A*	A	A*	A
Mathematics	A*	A	A*	A*
Science	A	A	A*	A

<i>Key</i>	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

For the past three years, the standards achieved in national tests have been consistently well above average or in the top 5 per cent (A\*) when compared both with all schools and with similar schools. Inspection findings indicate that the school is maintaining these high standards. It is particularly successful in the way in which it teaches writing. The keys to its success are the many writing opportunities open to pupils in all possible subjects and the fact that the school very rarely gives pupils the 'prop' of using worksheets.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are eager to learn. They concentrate very well, even when asked to work independently.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is impeccable. It is typified by many thoughtful acts regardless of whether or not they are noticed.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils work and play well together and relate very well to all adults in school.
Attendance	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school.

Pupils' eagerness to learn is evident throughout the school. They take a very responsible attitude to their work, and collaborate well or work hard independently, as appropriate. Relationships are built on mutual respect. Pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work, and the quality of teachers' marking shows the value they place on the efforts the pupils make. There is very little evidence of late arrival, and all lessons begin punctually.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
Very good overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The judgements made on the quality of the teaching observed seen were fully supported by the quality and the quantity of the work in pupils' books and in the work on display. Of the teaching seen, 56 per cent was good and 44 per cent very good. Teachers' high expectations of pupils to achieve, both academically and personally, are a key strength.

The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good. Although only a relatively small amount of teaching was observed, the work in pupils' books – both the quality and the quantity of it – provided strong evidence to support the inspectors' view that what they observed was typical of day to day work at the school. Sixty per cent of the teaching was good and 40 per cent very good. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught and the strategies adopted to develop writing skills are an example for others to follow.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The value placed on <i>each</i> subject of the national curriculum is a strong feature: none is sidelined.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school is quick to identify these pupils. As a result, problems are often nipped in the bud.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is an almost tangible feeling of spirituality in the school. Provision for pupils' spiritual development, and for their moral and social development, is very good. For cultural development, provision is sound.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a warm, caring and safe environment in which pupils can learn.

This school is skilled at developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, (particularly the former) through the full curriculum. As a result, no subject is squeezed or sidelined. The quantity and quality of work in geography and history, for example, is impressive. Worksheets are noticeable by their absence, particularly from Year 4 onwards. Even prior to that they are used only when they are the best possible choice for the task. Examples are the



structured phonics programme or the teaching of some concepts in mathematics. Teachers know pupils well and cater for their physical and emotional needs as well as for their intellectual ones. The school monitors pupils' performance carefully and is now successful in providing a curriculum that offers a good level of challenge to pupils of all abilities.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides exemplary leadership. She leads by example. Her deputy supports her very well. In turn, they have the full support of all staff in pursuing excellence.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governors are more effective than at the time of the last inspection. They now provide good support to the school and, while they look to the headteacher to guide their thinking, they are actively aware of their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school reflects critically on its work. It is happy with what it does, but never complacent.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well.

The school takes a close look at its work. Teachers' planning is read carefully and advice given; teaching is monitored termly and targets set. Advice and targets are genuinely valued by teachers and not seen as critical. Relationships amongst the staff are very good, and there is an indisputable commitment to continued improvement.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p><b>ALL</b> parents who responded said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their child likes school and makes good progress there.</li> <li>• Pupils behave well.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is approachable if parents have a problem.</li> <li>• Their children are expected to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<p>A few parents (13 per cent) said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they would like a closer partnership with the school and more information about how their child is getting on.</li> </ul>

Inspectors wholeheartedly support all the parents' positive views of the school. In relation to their concerns, inspectors feel that the school does a great deal to keep parents informed about the progress of their child. There are two written reports each year, two consultation evenings, and an 'open door' for any parent who needs to know more. The school welcomes the help that parents offer and encourages them to support their children through a regulated system of homework.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

**Standards in English, mathematics and science are in the top five per cent nationally. In particular, the school develops writing skills very well.**

1. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, at the end of Key Stage 2, have been consistently well above national averages for several years. Furthermore, there have been occasions when the result in one or more of the tested subjects has placed the school in the top 5 per cent nationally. In the most recent tests, this was true in all three subjects. This is a significant achievement, since attainment is broadly average when children enter the school. The progress that pupils make throughout the school is very good.

2. Such progress relates to pupils of all abilities. The least able pupils are supported and encouraged, with the result that they attain the expected national standard. More able pupils are offered a greater level of challenge and they attain the higher level. In the latest tests, for example, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in English, mathematics and science was 95, 90 and 100 per cent respectively. The comparative national figures were 75, 71 and 84 per cent. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level was, for each subject, more than double the national average: the school percentages were 65, 70 and 75, while the national ones were 29, 24 and 34.

3. Pupils' success is not restricted to these subjects. They do well across the full curriculum. There are several features that feed this overall success.

4. Firstly, the quality of all of the teaching in the school is good or better. This was the case in the teaching observed during the period of inspection, where 56 per cent of the teaching was good and 44 per cent was very good. A careful look at pupils' work - in their books and on display around the school - fully supports an overall judgement that the quality of teaching for these pupils is very good. There are no significant weaknesses, and a number of strengths. Of these, the most significant are:

- \* the quality of teachers' planning;
- \* high expectations of pupils - though they don't actually need to be *mentioned*, because they are part of the ethos of the school;
- \* the quality of teachers' marking, which praises, encourages and helps pupils to move on;
- \* the delightful relationships that exist between teachers and pupils and the confidence that this gives to the young learners;
- \* the time and effort that goes into helping each individual pupil understand how well s/he is doing, both academically and personally;
- \* the fact that teachers make learning such good fun.

5. Secondly, the headteacher carries out rigorous and supportive checking of teachers' plans, on a weekly basis, and watches them at work in the classroom. Her suggestions and encouragement inspire teachers to produce their best and then still to seek improvement.

6. Thirdly, numeracy skills are taught systematically and thoroughly. They are then practised and built upon in other areas of the curriculum. In science, for example, Year 5 pupils read the calibrations on a thermometer, and those in Year 2 time the number of seconds taken to do a ‘smelling’ test. Year 4 pupils complete a tally chart in geography, on the frequency of water use, while Year 1 pupils use the terms 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> when retelling the story of The Three Little Pigs.

7. Fourthly, literacy skills are developed particularly successfully. This is a powerful key to the school’s success. In the most recent national tests, 95 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4 or above in writing and, of those, 45 per cent achieved Level 5. Both results are significantly above the national averages. There are two main contributory factors in addition to the quality of teaching. The first is that the school is particularly good at using the full curriculum as a vehicle for allowing pupils to practise, refine and improve their writing skills. Hence, in geography, history, science and religious education in particular, pupils have frequent and varied opportunities to write. The benefit is a two-way one, of course, as it means that these subjects play a full and active part in the curriculum. They are neither squeezed nor sidelined. Secondly, worksheets are noticeable by their absence. They are used only very occasionally indeed above Year 3 and, with younger pupils, they are used only on occasions when they are the most beneficial format. Predominantly, this limits them to some mathematical tasks and to the programme used for teaching phonics. This has the effect of helping pupils to develop quickly as young writers. While there is still work for the school to do, its success to date means that the basic elements of writing are second nature to the oldest pupils in school. This frees these pupils to concentrate on developing the more complex challenges of style and vocabulary. Not only that, but the school has a very clear and realistic agenda for raising standards still further. This is fully detailed in the school development plan and is clearly visible in lesson plans and in lessons.

8. Finally, a key factor in the school’s success in teaching writing is the link between the school’s planned action, as set out in the school development plan (SDP), and day-to-day teaching. This is achieved as follows. When a focus for development is agreed by the staff and written into the SDP, the school then engages the strategy for which it has coined the term ‘layering’. This means translating the target into what it actually means for teachers in each year group. It is a simple task to spot the school’s targets – both in teachers’ planning and in their teaching. In this way, the target is achieved systematically and continues to be achieved, year on year.

**The school is outstandingly well led and managed by the headteacher. Her pursuit of excellence is infectious and, as a result, is shared by all the staff and demonstrated in the quality of their work.**

9. The headteacher leads this school with a quiet authority. Her staff are open in their respect and liking for her and, together, they are a powerful team working for the good of the pupils. The last report judged that the school met its mission statement, and the same is still true. To quote the statement will serve to explain the nature and extent of their success.

‘Our aim is to provide a caring environment where adults and children feel valued and secure, and to provide an education which promotes the growth and development of each individual in our care.’

‘This is what Yahweh asks of you, only this,  
that you act justly,  
that you love tenderly,  
and that you walk humbly with God.’

10. The headteacher takes an interest in the staff on a personal basis as well as on a professional one. While she is vigilant in overseeing the quality of their work – their planning and teaching for example – staff value her suggestions because they continually want to improve. Her comments are not seen as critical or threatening; they are simply accepted and acted upon. Teachers’ work is of a high quality. In fact, when account is taken of all the features that contribute to it, the overall quality of teaching is very good.

11. The level of the pupils’ involvement in their own learning and personal development is given a really high profile in the school. All pupils are aware of their current targets - selected by them and discussed with their teacher. In practical terms the targets genuinely do provide a focus for ‘special effort’. Some are work-related: ‘I will try harder with my geography’ and some are of a more personal nature. ‘I would like to improve my manners.’ ‘... to take more interest in my friends.’ ‘... to learn to co-operate more with children who annoy me.’ They are not simply written down and forgotten. In fact, together with a photograph, they are displayed for all to see, and all pupils talk about them eagerly. An inspector commented to a Year 3 pupil on the enormous effort he was putting into his observational drawing. He looked up from his work and his face beamed: ‘Thank you’, he said, ‘It’s one of my targets.’

12. Led by the headteacher, and making full use of all the data and other information, the school undertakes an honest, rigorous and continuous self-evaluation. It picks up on *relative* weaknesses and deals with them efficiently. It is difficult to see how this could be improved.

**Pupils are eager to learn. They relate really well to each other and to their teachers. Their thoughtfulness for others shines through their behaviour.**

13. One hundred per cent of the parents who responded to the questionnaire - and all those who attended the parents’ meeting - acknowledged that the behaviour of pupils in this school was good. Their view is fully justified. Pupils’ impeccable behaviour is complemented by their enthusiasm to learn, a feature fuelled by the efforts teachers make to ensure that learning

will be fun. Everyone gets on so well together here: pupils with pupils, adults with adults, and pupils with adults. The warmth of all these relationships means that pupils feel happy and secure. They know that if they need help they just need to ask. Tolerance, politeness, thoughtfulness and positive attitudes to work are the hallmarks of the school.

14. However, the personal and social skills that teachers foster so successfully are hard earned. When children enter the school, at the age of four, their personal and social development is significantly below average. Nevertheless, after a term and a half, children in the reception class have more than made up for that slow start and have already met the standards expected by the end of the school year. They work together, chat together and are courteous and friendly to adults.

15. Examples of thoughtfulness are numerous. It would be difficult to spend just a short time in the school without being impressed by the consideration shown by pupils to other pupils, to their teachers and to visitors. A few will serve to illustrate the outstanding quality of the social and interpersonal skills of pupils of all ages.

16. If it is playtime and a visitor enters through the gate, all pupils immediately stop what they are doing, greet the visitor with a smile, and stand very still until s/he has entered the building. This is to ensure that there can be no bumping by pupils or by stray balls from the football game that is in progress.

17. Following a playtime when the weather was inclement and pupils could not go outside, the 'clearing up bell' was rung. A quick reminder was given to the pupils in Years 1 and 2 as the teacher on duty passed by their classroom. Completely unsupervised, pupils put away their playtime activities, then sat down and waited for the second bell and the arrival of their teacher.

18. In a physical education lesson, Year 3 pupils ushered to the front of the line a pupil who had taken a tumble. It did not matter to the rest that they would have to wait longer for their turn. No fuss. No looks seeking approval from their teacher. Just a natural thing to do.

19. A Year 5 pupil noticed that a visitor was looking over his shoulder at the sheet of paper from which he was reading. The response was a spontaneous smile and a slight adjustment to the position of the sheet so that the visitor could see it more easily.

20. A pupil in Year 6 heard a classmate ask his teacher for help with spelling a word because it was not in his dictionary. Realising that she had a 'thicker' dictionary, she looked the word up and pointed it out to him. There was no suggestion at all that the pupil wanted recognition for what she had done. It was just natural to try to help.

21. Reception class children were walking along the corridor to the library while a class of older pupils was walking the other way. A visitor was 'in the way' and the corridor was too narrow for the job. The older pupils stopped automatically, the younger ones looked to them for help, and the older ones - smiling in reassurance - beckoned them through.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

22. There are no outstanding areas for this school to address, but the reason for this is worth a comment. The headteacher and staff constantly strive for perfection whilst recognising and acknowledging that they will never attain it. Their skill at self-evaluation - particularly that of the headteacher and her deputy - is exceptional: they know exactly what the school does well and where there is room for improvement. Perhaps the best analogy is that of spinning plates. This school has all its plates spinning successfully. Through its evaluation process, it knows exactly which plate will be the next to need an extra spin. Hence, none ever falls to the floor.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	9
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	44	56	0	0	0	0

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	<b>YR – Y6</b>
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	116
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	<b>YR – Y6</b>
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	10

<b>English as an additional language</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### *Attendance*

<b>Authorised absence</b>	<b>%</b>
School data	4.3

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	<b>%</b>
School data	0.1

National comparative data	5. 2
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National comparative data	0. 5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*



### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2000	13	13	25

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	26	26	26
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	100	100	100
	National	84	85	90

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	13	12	12
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	26	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	100	92	96
	National	84	88	88

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2000	10	10	20

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	9	8	10
	Total	19	18	20
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	95	90	100
	National	75	72	85

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	9	8	9
	Total	19	18	19
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	95	90	95
	National	70	72	80

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	94
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

***Teachers and classes***

**Qualified teachers and classes:**

**YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	23.2

**Education support staff:**

**YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	38

***Exclusions in the last school year***

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

***Financial information***

Financial year	<b>1999-2000</b>
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	213730.00
Total expenditure	213036.00
Expenditure per pupil	1732.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	11361.00
Balance carried forward to next year	12028.00



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

	45.7%
Number of questionnaires sent out	116
Number of questionnaires returned	53

### Percentage of responses in each category

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	77.4	22.6	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	66.0	34.0	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	77.4	22.6	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45.1	52.9	2.0	0	0
The teaching is good.	73.6	26.4	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51.9	34.6	13.5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73.1	26.9	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73.6	26.4	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	43.4	43.4	13.2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	58.8	41.2	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71.7	22.6	1.9	0	3.8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43.4	45.3	7.5	1.9	1.9