



St Pius X Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114249
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279345
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Angela Westington HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Thornfield Road
School category	Voluntary aided		The Grove
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Consett, County Durham
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01207 503604
Number on roll	67	Fax number	01207 503604
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Anne Warnaby
Date of previous inspection	1 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr Joseph Michael Quigley

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	Inspection number 279345
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Pius X Roman Catholic Primary School serves a socially disadvantaged and semi rural community in the former steel manufacturing area of north west County Durham. With only 62 pupils, it is much smaller than the average school and many of the pupils are the second or third generation of their families to attend. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The attainment of children on entry to the school is below national norms. There are no pupils for whom English is their second language and none of minority ethnic heritages.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Pius X Roman Catholic Primary School is in very good heart and in very good hands. This is an outstanding school. It is very well led and managed. The headteacher is committed to improving continuously the provision for pupils. He has a very clear and accurate overview of the school's strengths and areas for development. He has built very strong links with a wide range of community agencies and is highly regarded and respected. Parents are unanimous in their praise and support for the school. The level of care and guidance provided for pupils is outstanding and, as a result, their personal development and well-being are excellent.

Despite this being a very small school the curriculum provided is good, going beyond statutory requirements to ensure that all pupils experience a range of cultural, sporting and musical events and activities. The school has strong links with other agencies that enrich the life of the school. The quality of teaching is good. Pupils achieve well; those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities particularly so. The school has received an award for ensuring that all pupils are included fully in school life and are supported effectively. The children in the reception group make good progress, given their relatively low starting points.

The issues identified in the last inspection have been fully addressed. This inspection has identified only one significant area for further development, that of the attendance and punctuality of a small number of pupils.

Given the many strengths identified and the obvious capacity of the school to improve even further, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the attendance and punctuality of the small number of identified pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school's own evaluation of this aspect of its work is that it is good and the inspection findings confirm this.

St Pius X is a very small school and each year the numbers of children taking part in the national assessments and tests for 7 and 11 year olds are very small. For example, in 2005, only five pupils took the Key Stage 2 tests, too small a number with which to make reliable comparisons with national figures. However, data provided by the school show that pupils achieve well whatever their starting points, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Evidence from this inspection confirms this.

On entry to the school, in the reception year, the overall attainment of pupils is below national expectations. Although they make good progress, few pupils will exceed the national goals set for this age group and only one or two might meet them. Nevertheless, they make a good start to their education. Pupils in reception learn their

phonic sounds, read simple texts and are beginning to write using high frequency words and their phonic knowledge. They count to 10 and use small amounts of money. The more able children can combine these small amounts, thus beginning to undertake simple addition.

Pupils continue to make good progress so that by Years 1 and 2 they have learnt to read quickly and effectively. They read increasingly difficult texts fluently and with understanding. The more able pupils write well, with well formed letters, constructing clear sentences that build into logical and coherent pieces of writing. The younger and less able pupils achieve well too. They learn to read and write with increasing confidence.

In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress so that by Years 5 and 6 their work is of a high standard. Their recorded work in science is particularly good. In mathematics, they find equivalences of complex fractions and explain how they do this. The more able write well and the presentation of their work is good.

Throughout the school, pupils' skills in speaking and listening are good. They are used to speaking and listening to adults informally and formally in school Masses and assemblies. They hold mature, intelligent conversations about a range of issues, such as the work of CAFOD (Catholic Aid For Overseas Development), the 'Live 8' initiative or topics closer to home such as the school council's work and the ongoing debate about the school tuck shop.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school rates this aspect as very good but the inspection finding is that it is outstanding.

The very strong Catholic, Christian and caring ethos permeates the life of the school and was commented upon by those interviewed during the inspection as well as parents in their response to the questionnaires. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. They are knowledgeable about and reflect upon a wide range of important international issues. Pupils of different ages were able to discuss with the inspector their views about the work of CAFOD, the importance of providing water pumps and building wells in Africa and the Sudan and the cost of providing chickens and goats to needy communities. They also spoke with feeling about changes made to the school tuck shop in order for it to meet the 'Healthy School' criteria. They know why they need to adopt safe practices and follow a healthy lifestyle.

The pupils behave extremely well; they are very polite and considerate. Younger ones spoke about the 'Friendship Stop' and how they would be looked after by an older child, 'a buddy', if they ever feel unhappy at playtimes. This development is an initiative suggested by the school council.

They are keen to learn and they enjoy school. They talk enthusiastically about what they are learning and about the various activities on offer, such as their French lessons and visits to local museums.

A small number of pupils arrive at school after the closure of the registers and this causes them to be marked as absent. An even smaller number have unsatisfactory attendance overall. Given the very small numbers in the school, this has a disproportionate effect upon the school's overall attendance figure and makes it unsatisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school rates teaching and learning as good and the inspection findings confirm this.

The quality of teaching is good because certain factors are present in all the teaching observed. The quality of teachers' planning is mostly good; that for the mixed age classes is particularly effective, but some of the planning for literacy lessons could be developed further. Teachers' subject and technical knowledge are good, and they know their pupils very well. Teachers have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. In a good Year 5/6 mathematics lesson on equivalent fractions, the teacher picked up consistently on pupils' misconceptions and errors and pursued the points until their understanding was clearer and more secure. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive and this fosters in the pupils a sense of security in their learning and in their teachers, especially for the less able children.

Teachers take time and trouble to plan a range of activities that engage pupils. Pupils have individual targets for improvement and, generally, are guided effectively towards improving their work. Some of the marking of pupils' writing in Years 3 and 4, however, is not as constructive as it could be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The inspection findings confirm the school's own evaluation that the quality of the curriculum is good.

All subjects of the National Curriculum are covered and all statutory requirements are met. A significant feature in this school is the commitment to ensuring breadth and enrichment through first hand experience, as a result of which the school uses all available opportunities in the locality, such as support for teaching French from the local specialist language college and Durham University. The headteacher ensures that all children participate in certain activities before they leave the school; for example, visits to Durham Cathedral, to Newcastle City Centre, to the coastline and to Hadrian's Wall. Trips and visitors and special events feature fully in the school's diary and parents and grandparents are regular contributors to school life. During the inspection, the Year 3 and 4 class cooked a three course meal as part of their half term unit on healthy eating and exercise. Music and drama are also given prominence and these are linked effectively to the foundation subjects such as history and religious education. Given

the small number of adults available to deliver the curriculum, including assistants and parent helpers, the school is justified in feeling proud of its provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school judges this aspect of its provision to be outstanding and the inspection confirms this.

The school takes the highest possible care of its pupils and is committed to their welfare and to supporting them at all levels. The staff, especially the headteacher, know the pupils and their families very well and use this information carefully to monitor and guide individual children. Pupils trust staff and know who to turn to if they need help. There is very good support for them when they are upset or troubled. Parents and carers feel welcome in the school. Child protection and health and safety procedures are very well established and there are very good links with outside agencies, which give a range of help to the pupils. There are clear strategies in place for the early identification of children who may be in need of additional emotional support.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well supported.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school's own evaluation of leadership and management is that it is good. The inspection finding is that it is outstanding.

The headteacher provides excellent strategic leadership and direction for the school. Alongside this, he has managed to retain the role of 'lead teaching professional' so he has a very clear and accurate understanding of the issues that will help or hinder improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in this school. This is partly because until very recently he had a substantial teaching commitment, teaching for 60% of the time. He maintains a teaching commitment which allows him 'to keep his finger on the pulse' of the school.

Despite this teaching commitment, the day to day management of the school has been and is very effective. All required systems are in place. The school finances are well managed. For example, plans are in hand for a new build project.

Governance of the school is very good. There are well established procedures for the governing body and subcommittees, with clearly defined remits for each. Governors are clear about their responsibilities and can explain the latest priorities. They are deeply committed to the school.

The headteacher is well supported by an able deputy, who along with her teaching commitment carries a large portfolio of other responsibilities. The other teaching staff equally carry heavy management loads. The headteacher undertakes lesson observations. The very small number of teachers limits the options available for them to undertake lesson observations in all subjects as this could disrupt pupils' learning

quite significantly. The school is managing this wisely through timetabling specific subjects or aspects for review and then focusing on them as a whole school.

Overall, the leadership and management of the school make a significant contribution to the school's capacity to improve even further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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To the pupils of:

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The Grove

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County Durham

DH8 8AX

24 March 2006

Dear Children

As you know, I visited your school recently and I would like to thank you for talking to me and making me feel so welcome.

I looked at many of the things you do in school and talked with your teachers and some of the people who help you, as well as a few of your parents. I thought that you behaved very well and I could tell that you and your families are very proud of your school. These are some of the things that I really liked.

The people in school work very closely with your parents to make sure that you are safe, well cared for and happy when you come to school. You especially like the 'Friendship Stop' which the school council organised. Some of you spoke to me about this, so I know you agree.

There are lots of interesting things for you to do including the school clubs, visits and your French lessons. I was very impressed when some of the younger children spoke to me in French! Well done.

You enjoy being with each other and get on well with the adults in school and you are trying hard to be healthy and eat sensibly.

You know a great deal about the aid work that charities do in other countries, especially the work of CAFOD, and I really enjoyed listening to you talk about what you did for 'Live 8' and the letters you wrote to Tony Blair!

You work hard and your teachers work hard too. Some of the work in your books is super.

Mr Quigley is a really good headteacher and he does everything he can to make sure that you get the best possible education.

I have asked Mr Quigley to try to help the small number of children who don't manage to get to school on time or every day. It is very important that you all come to school every day, as you will miss such a lot of learning if you are not here, and we all want you to do well.

I really enjoyed meeting you all at St Pius. I know that you will continue to work hard and enjoy school.

I wish you every blessing for the future

Angela M Westington

Her Majesty's Inspector