



# St Andrew's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 122304  
**LEA** Northumberland  
**Inspection number** 281225  
**Inspection dates** 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Dave Byrne

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Albion Way
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Blyth
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 9		Northumberland, NE24 5BL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01670 352606
<b>Number on roll</b>	222	<b>Fax number</b>	01670 545692
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Peter Lovett
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pauline Johnstone

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 9	<b>Inspection dates</b> 13 June 2006 - 14 June 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281225
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This school serves an area with above average deprivation and attainment on entry is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties is broadly average as is the proportion eligible for free school meals. A small proportion of pupils have English as an additional language.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school which gives good value for money. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher and effective management, coupled with good teaching, result in pupils achieving well and making good progress across the school. The school is full of happy, smiling children who thrive because of the school's good care and support. They behave well and develop good attitudes. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in good attendance. Children in the Nursery make a good start to school life and make good progress from the below average skills with which most begin school. In Reception, the large majority of children do well and reach the standards expected for their age, and some exceed them. The small minority of higher-attaining children, however, are not challenged enough because they do not start the National Curriculum when they are ready. In 2005, standards in Year 2 were broadly average and at the end of Year 4 attainment was similar to that expected for pupils' age. School data show that this year the school believes its challenging targets for English and mathematics for Year 2 and 4 will be exceeded. This reflects recent improvements in teaching and learning that have accelerated the pupils' progress. Good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that pupils not only progress well academically but also develop confidence and a feeling of self-worth. As a result, children are thoughtful, considerate and respectful to others. Although pupils generally take pride in what they do, the quality of presentation in their books is not as good as it should be. This is mainly due to differences in teachers' expectations but also because pupils are not motivated by the predictable and rather unadventurous choices they have when recording their work. Good use is made of assessment to inform teachers' planning but pupils' involvement in their own assessment is inconsistent across the school because the quality of marking varies between classes. The curriculum is good overall but planning for pupils to apply their basic skills to new and challenging situations is insufficient in the full range of subjects. Community links are good and enrich learning; for example, pupils talk with great pride about their involvement in a community film project, An Anthem for Northumberland, and also about their contribution to the building of the school wildlife garden. The school is efficiently run and effectively governed. Astute deployment of staff makes the best of the teachers' and teaching assistants' skills. Parents are very supportive of the school but they are reluctant to help in it. The school has improved since the last inspection and has the capacity to continue to do so in future.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations for the achievement of the highest attaining children in Reception.
- Improve marking so that pupils are clear about how to improve their work and set high expectations for its presentation.
- Use more imaginative approaches to the pupils' recording of their written work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good overall. The pupils make good overall progress throughout the school, reaching average standards in Year 4 from a below-average starting point in the Nursery. Pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties and with English as an additional language also make the same good progress as others.

In the Foundation Stage, overall progress is good and most children reach expected standards. In the 2005 national tests for Year 2, the results in English, mathematics and science were broadly average but too few pupils exceeded the level expected for their age. The school tests the pupils at the end of Year 4. In 2005, the results of these tests indicated that standards were broadly typical for pupils of this age but again, the proportion exceeding an average standard was low.

This year, challenging targets have been set for English and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 4 and the school expects that these targets will be met. The inspectors' observation of lessons and examination of the pupils' work show that the rate of their progress is improving and that the higher attaining pupils in both Key Stages 1 and 2 are reaching higher standards than before.

The gap between the performance of boys and girls, as shown in the past results, is narrowing. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are higher than they were at the last inspection. Recent investments in computers and interactive whiteboards, coupled with staff training, have also helped to lift standards.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are keen to come to school and behave well. Attendance is above average. Pupils love learning and in lessons there is often a real sense of excitement. For example, in a Year 3 class, the pupils were amazed to discover that it is possible to light a bulb 'without wires'. They willingly take responsibility for different aspects of school life; for instance, by being playtime buddies and by influencing decisions that affect them by being school councillors. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as a result of the provision of a wide range of activities which increasingly develop children who are sensible, mature and capable of using their initiative. Pupils work well together and grow in confidence in their time in school, leaving it well prepared for their next stage of education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall. In Key Stages 1 and 2, in particular, teachers and teaching assistants take care to ensure that lessons are planned to meet every pupil's needs. Lessons are well managed and organised and good use is made of ICT to bring learning alive. The views of pupils are valued and teachers are skilled in the use of questions to develop ideas and opinions. In the Foundation Stage, activities are generally well planned and resources used effectively. Some higher-attaining children in Reception, however, are not challenged enough because they often do not start the National Curriculum when they are ready. Teachers make good use of assessment in English, mathematics and science to identify ways of raising standards for example, in writing in Year 2. There are differences though in the way that marking informs pupils about how they can improve. This reduces the positive impact on learning of pupils' involvement in their own assessment. Expectations for the quality of presentation of their work vary and at times are not high enough. This is exacerbated by a lack of imagination in the opportunities given to pupils to record their work and, in some classes, an overuse of worksheets.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum for the vast majority of pupils. Good provision is made for literacy and numeracy. The provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now an integral part of pupils' learning. While all subjects are efficiently planned, there could be more planned opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their basic skills of literacy and numeracy to new and challenging situations in all subjects. Recent initiatives, such as 'Philosophy for Children', make an important contribution to the pupils' good personal development. A wide range of additional activities enrich the curriculum. These include the learning of Italian and a range of physical activities and organised games.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. There is no evidence of bullying or racial harassment. Child protection arrangements are in place and the school is a healthy and safe place. Parents rightly say that staff know their children well and help them to become confident and independent. Thoughtful approaches to supporting pupils' emotional and personal development add to their self-confidence and academic progress. Assessment is well established throughout the school and used effectively to plan for pupils' personal and academic needs, particularly those with English as an additional language and pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties. The pupils' own involvement in assessment, however, is not fully established in all classes. The

school does its best to involve parents in school life and communication with them is good, but a disappointingly small number volunteer to help.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good with outstanding leadership by the headteacher, who has high expectations of staff and pupils. Senior staff have a very clear vision of the school's strengths and how to rectify the weaknesses. Equal value is given to every child and the importance of good personal development and academic achievement is integral to everything that the school does. A strong team spirit between all staff is helping to raise standards. The school's self-evaluation is refreshingly honest and accurate; weaknesses are not glossed over and action is planned to rectify them. Responsibilities are mostly delegated effectively; for example, the subject leaders participate fully in evaluating and raising standards. However, the lack of a leader in the Foundation Stage holds back some aspects of provision, for example, the early introduction of higher attainers to the National Curriculum. Good governance has a positive impact on the school's effectiveness. Under the skilled leadership of the chair, the governors keep a close eye on getting the best value from the budget. Since the last inspection, the school has done well to raise standards in ICT and improve provision for children with learning and/or behavioural difficulties. Given the current quality of management and teaching, and the pupils' improving progress, the school clearly has the capacity to improve 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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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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13 June 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful during the inspection this week. We agree with you that St Andrew's is a good school. It is very caring and makes sure that you are safe and secure. You enjoy learning because you have good teachers who give you exciting lessons. As a result, you are doing well in most subjects and also learning how to work with other children. Your good behaviour, politeness and willingness to take responsibility prepare you well for the next stage of your education in middle school.

Although the standard of your work is good, we feel that, at times, you could do better with its neatness and presentation and we have asked the school to help you to do this. We have also asked that more thought be given to the way you record work in your books so that it is more imaginative and exciting. Teachers know you all very well indeed. This is a good thing because it helps them to give you the help that you need. We feel however, that the marking of your work could be more helpful so that it gives you even better understanding of your next steps in learning and how to improve.

No school is good by accident. In your case it is because of you and your teachers but very importantly it is because of the thought and wisdom of your headteacher. Mrs Johnstone knows you all very well and has a very clear idea of how you can all do even better in school. If you listen to her and try to do as she asks, there is no doubt that you will do even better and enjoy school even more.

We wish you all lots of luck and hope that you continue to work hard and do your best to be good citizens.

Yours sincerely

David Byrne and Ann Wallis (Your school inspectors)