



# Thomas Percy Roman Catholic V A Middle School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 122372  
**Local Authority** Northumberland  
**Inspection number** 281245  
**Inspection dates** 27–28 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Peter Harris HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary	<b>School address</b>	Blakelaw Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Alnwick
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13		Northumberland NE66 1AZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01665 602650
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	97	<b>Fax number</b>	01665 606297
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Chris McElhone
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Dorothy Brett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2000		

<b>Age group</b> 9–13	<b>Inspection dates</b> 27–28 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281245
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Thomas Percy is much smaller than most middle schools. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and almost all have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs is above the national average and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is just above. Attendance is well above the national average. Pupils mainly join the school from two local Roman Catholic First schools. The number of pupils in the school fluctuates each year more than it does in most schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Thomas Percy is a good school, with many outstanding elements to its work. Leadership and management maximise the benefits of a small school and overcome any potential limitations. Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe and secure and they are very well cared for. They are given the skills and confidence they need to proceed to the next stage of their education and beyond. Partnerships with other schools and other agencies are very well developed and as a result, pupils are very well linked to the community and make an outstanding contribution to it.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The range of activities and events the school organises, and the enriched opportunities provided in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities make a strong contribution to this. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and attendance is well above the national average. They are enthusiastic about what the school offers and keen to join in.

Teaching is consistently good and relationships are excellent. There is very careful assessment of pupils' progress, which is used well to help their learning. There are very effective systems in place to track pupils' progress and effective arrangements to intervene to help pupils when they need it. The school is wholly committed to inclusion and very effective in meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress. The standards achieved by the pupils and their progress are good overall, especially in English and science. In mathematics, standards are average and, given the pupils' starting points, progress is satisfactory and sometimes better for older pupils. However, mathematics remains an area for the school to improve, because what is achieved is not as high as in other subjects.

A particular strength is the very effective and visionary leadership of the headteacher. The senior staff in the school, who carry a range of responsibilities share the same strong commitment to the pupils' happiness and achievement. Along with the other effective and committed staff, they ensure that the school meets pupils' needs and brings the best out in them. The school evaluates its quality accurately and is constantly striving to improve on it. The school is small, but resources are used well, and the outcomes for pupils are good overall and often outstanding, and it delivers good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standards and improve the progress of pupils in mathematics to be the same as in other subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The standards achieved by pupils and the progress they make are good overall. Attainment on entry to the school is average; the school has identified weaker attainment in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

In 2005, at the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was above the national average in English and in science. Furthermore, more pupils reached the higher levels in English than was found nationally. Standards were in line with the national average in mathematics. In 2006, standards were well above the national average in English and science at the expected level for pupils, and in line with those at the higher level. In mathematics, the standards achieved were in line with the national average at the expected level, and below at the higher level. In both years, the progress pupils made in English and science was good and in mathematics it was satisfactory.

Pupils continue to do well until they leave the school at the end of Year 8. In 2006 they reached slightly above average standards in mathematics representing better than satisfactory progress for these older pupils.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy school very much. They have an enthusiastic and cooperative approach to lessons and school activities. They are happy and confident. They behave very responsibly in class and around school, showing consideration for others. Moral development is outstanding and pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Their attendance is well above the national average. They feel safe, appreciate how the school looks after them and know where to get help if they need it.

The school has a Healthy School award and pupils understand what to do to be healthy and safe. They participate in physical activity, and undertake a range of ambitious trips and activities with care. There is an active school council which provides useful ideas on how to prevent and/or deal with bullying and ideas about healthy eating, to which the school responds. Pupils' contribution to the school and to the wider community is outstanding. They participate extensively in helping charities. Almost all pupils are involved in large scale school productions. They are well connected to their locality. They are seeking to ensure that their new healthy tuck shop is linked to fair trading, an aim of the town as a whole. They have good opportunities to develop their economic well-being, working in teams to plan and organise social events to a budget. The school has good links with and is well supported by, local business education organisations.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good. Lessons are enjoyable because they are very well planned. Pupils are interested in their learning. The school has effective systems in place to ensure that teaching and learning meet the full range of learners' needs well, through setting and intervening to give pupils more support. Assessment procedures are very well developed; pupils' progress is monitored carefully and information is used well to focus on their needs. Teaching is based on very effective use of technology and this makes learning enjoyable. Teaching assistants are used very well to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this helps them to make good progress in lessons. Targets to help pupils improve are shared with them well by the teachers. Although sometimes, teachers need to ensure that all pupils are involved by directing questions to individual pupils, they enjoy questions and respond with interest. Pupils' work is well presented and regularly marked. Teachers' comments help pupils to understand how they can improve.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum provided for pupils is good. It has been thoughtfully devised by the school and gives the expected allocation of time. It has sufficient time for personal, social and health education, citizenship and religious education, giving the pupils good opportunities to reflect on health issues, rights and responsibilities and to understand living in a multi-racial society. There is good provision for science and physical education, providing many opportunities for practical work. The curriculum is enriched by French at both key stages. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is extensive. There is good specialist accommodation and teaching to support pupils in their studies. A particular strength is the range of activities in the school at lunchtime and after school, including a homework club, which the pupils appreciate and enjoy and helps them with their school work. The school also takes care to organise events and trips to enrich pupils' learning, as in the trip to France involving half the pupils in the school, where they participated in events at the Menin Gate.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are outstanding. Pupils are treated as individuals in this small school. As a result, they feel valued and develop a positive attitude and confidence in themselves. There are very good arrangements with the first schools to ensure that pupils settle in well and careful guidance and support is provided when they transfer to high schools. Staff know the pupils very well, and relationships are warm and respectful. Pupils have regular opportunities to discuss issues with their class teacher. Pupils assume many positions of responsibility

and have opportunities, including through the school council, to voice their views and express any concerns.

The support to pupils with learning needs and disabilities is allocated with care, and they make good progress. Vulnerable children are very well supported by school systems, which pay close regard to their safety, help them to be organised and cared for and to make good progress. Procedures for child protection are well understood and followed. Arrangements for safeguarding children from danger meet what is required. The school gives great attention to guiding pupils to be safe and live healthy lives, and pays careful attention to risk, and health and safety. Parents appreciate the effort the school gives to guide, support and care for pupils and how this benefits them. There are very good links to other services and agencies who work in the school to support pupils with particular needs.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The school manages to maximise the benefits of a small school and to effectively overcome the potential limitations of its size. The headteacher leads the school very well by setting a clear and well judged direction, assisted by her own dedication to teaching in the school. She is also an accomplished manager, who has well organised systems which enable the school to function with rigour. She is well supported by her senior team, who are expert in their various areas of responsibilities and who are determined to continue their own professional development. She is also well supported by the effective work and commitment of her teachers and other staff, who work very well as a team. The governors are well informed. Each has a particular link with a specific area of the school and this enables them to support the school's improvement plans well. The result is pupils who are cared for to the highest standard, education which ensures that pupils always progress as expected, and usually better than this, and a happy school, where pupils enjoy their education very much and achieve well. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils are included and supported very well. The exhaustive attention given to vulnerable pupils helps them to make good progress. The performance of the school is monitored very closely by effective systems. The school evaluates its quality accurately, has improved well since the last inspection and has a strong and good capacity to improve further. The school is small and there are high costs, but its outcomes are often outstanding and it provides good value for money.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thomas Percy Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Middle School

Blakelaw Road

Alnwick

Northumberland

NE66 1AZ

27 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the help you gave me when I inspected your school. You were friendly and confident when we spoke about your work and what you thought about the school.

I would also like you to thank the many parents who responded to my questions about the school; I took their views carefully into account.

You go to a good school. Many things your school does are outstanding. It is a happy school and you feel safe. You achieve good standards in your work and make good progress. You are very well behaved. You try hard in lessons. Your attendance is very good. You told me you enjoyed school very much. I could see this.

You are helped a great deal by your teachers, who work very hard for you and teach you well.

You have a headteacher who leads the school very well. She gets a lot of support from your teachers, your teaching assistants and school staff and the school's governors. They all make great efforts to be sure you are safe, well cared for and get a lot out of the lessons and the many activities the school has. You told me you appreciated what they do for you.

Most things in your school are good or outstanding.

There is one way I have recommended the school could improve. At the moment the standards you reach in mathematics are satisfactory; but not as high as in your other subjects. I think you can reach the same standards in mathematics. Your teachers will be helping you; you can help too by making sure you pay close attention to your work in mathematics and always ask for help when you do not understand something.

Thank you again for an enjoyable time in your school, and I wish you continued happiness and success at Thomas Percy.

Peter Harris

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools