

St Catherine's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108507
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	288121
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Reporting inspector	David Shearsmith

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Colin Carr
Headteacher	Mr Michael Ewing
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Greystoke Gardens Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE2 1PS
Telephone number	0191 2326803
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is set in an urban area of Newcastle. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the percentage of those who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is also above average. There are few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The attainment of children when they start the Nursery is broadly in line with expectations for their age. The school has additional community facilities for Sport and Arts provision

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 with outstanding features which is well led and managed. The headteacher is well respected by parents, governors and staff. The care, well-being, enjoyment and achievement of every pupil are underpinned by the school's strong Catholic ethos. The school has a good insight into its strengths and weaknesses and as a result, is constantly improving and adapting its provision to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 2 where performance has recently been identified by the school as a key area for improvement and effective strategies have been implemented successfully.

Children enter the Nursery with broadly typical attainment for their age. They make good progress and achieve well across all areas of learning through the Foundation Stage. A significant proportion of higher attaining children leave the school at the end of the Nursery Year to attend other schools. Therefore, on entry to the Reception class, attainment is still broadly average but most pupils make good progress and achieve well, attaining standards at least in line with those expected of five-year-olds by the time they enter Year 1.

- Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the rest of the school. Standards at the end of both key stages have varied year on year, reflecting different starting points and the proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2006, standards were above average by the end of Year 2 but below average in Year 6. However, this particular group of pupils achieved well overall and made good progress through the key stage, although some more able pupils were not always challenged because of some variability in teaching quality. The school has tackled this effectively and most of the able pupils now achieve as well as other pupils in the school and make good progress. Standards are improving with pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 achieving well and attaining above the level usually expected of pupils of a similar age. Pupils do particularly well in science.

St Catherine's is a caring school and has high aspirations for its pupils. Parents put great store by the school's welcoming family atmosphere. They particularly value the way their children settle into the school and become happy and eager learners. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy learning and have a good understanding of how they can stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe and become responsible members of their school and local community. This contributes positively to the way they learn and the good progress they make. All statutory safeguarding measures are in place.

Teaching and learning are good overall with some outstanding teaching. The implementation of new systems has provided a clear and accurate picture of how well pupils make progress and they are being used well to identify those pupils who need additional support to help them improve. This is helping teachers to plan for the next stages of learning and ensures that all pupils are being challenged and are working as hard as they can. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good overall. Assessments are now used rigorously to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities and interests; as a result, most pupils are now making good progress. Marking and feedback to pupils does not always focus enough on what they need to do to improve. The curriculum provides pupils with an outstanding range of opportunities to promote effective learning. The use of information and communication technology (ICT), visits, visitors, sports and the arts all help to make learning exciting and interesting. Parents say learning for their children is fun. The school gives good value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate at which pupils, especially the more able, make progress in English and mathematics.
- Use marking and feedback more effectively to ensure that pupils know how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

- Achievement is good. Standards attained at the end of Years 2 and 6 vary year on year, reflecting differences in each cohort including both their starting points and the proportions with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most make good progress through Key Stages 1 and 2; those currently in Year 2 and in Years 5 and 6 are achieving well and attaining above that expected of pupils of a similar age. The school is now in line to meet its challenging targets and is well placed to raise standards further. After starting school with skills and knowledge in line with what is expected for pupils of that age, children make good progress and by the time they leave Nursery they are exceeding expectations for their age. Many able children leave the school at the end of their time in the Nursery. However, those that remain make good progress in Reception and attain standards in line with those expected nationally by the end of the Foundation Stage.

Pupils make good progress, and standards by the age of seven are above average. Assessment results at the end of Year 2 have varied year on year but were above average in 2006. Standards are currently above average and the school's own data shows that pupils generally make good progress.

Most pupils continue to make good progress overall through Key Stage 2. Pupils do particularly well in Years 5 and 6, and some outstanding teaching enables progress to accelerate. Pupils achieve particularly well in science and standards in the national tests are above average. In 2006, some more able pupils in Year 6 did not achieve as well as they ought in the national assessments. However, the school has tackled this in Years 5 and 6 and able pupils are now achieving as well as other pupils in these classes. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their targets. Those from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to their classmates and achieve well. Despite good support, the mobility of pupils and the numbers joining the school in Key Stage 2 with limited confidence in the use of English sometimes have an impact on the overall standards reached at the end of Key Stage 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. There is outstanding development of pupils' spiritual understanding and experience, and pupils are well aware of what is right and wrong. Behaviour in lessons and outside the classroom is excellent. This contributes to a good learning environment in which pupils can concentrate and work hard.

The school ensures that pupils learn about and have experience of a wide range of other cultures. Along with the wide range of ethnic groups in the school, this means pupils have a good understanding of other cultures and are tolerant towards others' beliefs, while being confident with their own. The school has taken active steps to listen to pupils' views on the curriculum and has introduced topic work, which makes the lessons relevant and interesting. Pupils report that they thoroughly enjoy school, particularly their lessons. They appreciate the effort their

teachers put into make learning fun. Attendance is above average and parents report that pupils are keen to get to school in the morning.

Pupils are reminded about keeping safe and they are making independent choices to ensure their own and others' safety. They have a clear understanding about how to adopt a healthy lifestyle as well as the benefits, which they speak enthusiastically about. They support a wide and interesting range of charities as well as making the wider community a better place, for example by supporting Fair Trade. This work has led to recognition in a national magazine.

Pupils' key skills are being developed well to contribute to their future economic well-being and to ensure good preparation for their next stage of learning. Pupils have been actively involved in research on what 'Every Child Matters' means. This has helped them contribute usefully to teachers' own learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching overall is good with some teaching that is outstanding. The consistently effective teaching in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 enables most pupils to achieve well and reach above average standards. Warm relationships and well ordered lessons ensure that pupils behave very well and enjoy learning. Lessons begin well with good questioning, which reinforces previous learning and checks pupils' levels of understanding. Teachers use different teaching styles, tasks and activities to maintain the interest of boys and girls and this has been very successful in ensuring good progress. In one very successful Year 5 lesson, pupils were highly engaged and made outstanding progress. The lesson moved on at a rapid pace and work met pupils' learning needs well. The school has focused its efforts on improving the teaching of writing. This has had a positive impact and has significantly improved pupils' progress in writing. In some lessons in Years 3 and 4, work is not always as well matched to pupils' abilities as it could be. Higher attaining pupils are expected to do more work but not necessarily at the higher level of which they are capable.

The school's recent emphasis on tracking systems and analysis of work provides teachers with a very detailed record of pupils' progress which they are using well to ensure that pupils are working as hard as they can in most classes. Individual targets are set and work is planned to reflect the needs of learners even more closely. This is less true of work set for higher attainers in some classes in Key Stage 2, and marking does not always sufficiently focus on what pupils need to do to improve. In the majority of lessons, teachers use an outstanding range of teaching methods to match the way that pupils learn best.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. The school provides a broad and enriched curriculum, with a strong focus on the core skills which ensures that pupils make good progress and achieve well. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills and build their confidence in using these skills across the curriculum. The success of this is reviewed regularly and pupils are appropriately involved in providing their views. This helps ensure that the curriculum gives pupils every opportunity to develop and use their literacy and mathematics

in meaningful and relevant ways. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and both visits and projects with other groups help to make the curriculum interesting and exciting.

Writing is given a high profile; pupils collate their stories into books, produce high quality displays of written work and produce 'Top Cat', a termly newsletter written, edited and published by the Year 6 pupils. This promotes high quality skills in English for pupils in Year 6. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which allows most to make good progress. ICT is used extensively to support the curriculum.

Contact with visiting professionals, sports coaches and artists, and visits by local medical students for a teddy bears clinic helps to raise aspirations. Curriculum provision for the Foundation Stage is very effective and ensures that children make good progress across all areas of learning. Although the school has satisfactory provision for outdoor play within the Foundation Stage, it is aware of the need for further development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school where teachers and other adults know the pupils very well and have the highest regard for their welfare and learning. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out thoroughly and safeguarding procedures are fully in place. There are particularly good partnerships with external agencies, including other local schools and local teacher training providers. The accurate tracking of pupils' progress is very effective and leads to the identification of good individual targets which are referred to in lessons and reviewed to ensure progress has been made. Pupils report that they are helped to learn and they know how to get help.

Very caring and supportive relationships in the Nursery and Reception classes ensure that children settle into school well. This enables children to have a secure start to their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior leadership team and a supportive governing body lead and manage all aspects of the school well. The headteacher's determined, visionary and nurturing leadership has successfully developed an outstanding curriculum and outstanding support for personal and social development for everyone in the school.

The evaluation of national and school test results is now used well to set whole-school and class targets which are challenging. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been effective in identifying areas for development. For example, assessment systems have recently been revised and are proving to be a very valuable tool in tracking and measuring pupils' progress to ensure that they achieve their full potential. This has been a focus for the school and for evaluating its overall performance, which is well supported by rigorous systems for identifying how well pupils are taught and learn. Governors have developed their role well and are well informed about their responsibility in supporting and challenging the school. They have allocated funds to improve the school so that pupils can learn in an attractive and spacious environment.

The majority of parents consider the school is good. Their confidence is well founded. This is a good school which has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to

continue to provide a good education for its pupils and raise standards in English and mathematics further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

14 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Catherine's RC Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE2 1PS

Thank you so much for being friendly and welcoming when we visited your school a short while ago.

Yours is a good school with outstanding support for your personal development and an excellent curriculum where your headteacher and teachers work very hard to make lessons fun and help you learn. There were many things about your school that we thought were good and some of these were exceptionally so. You all behave very well, work hard and achieve well.

The targets your teachers set for you are a really useful way for you to know what you have to learn, so do keep looking at them to make sure you are improving. When we looked at your work we were very pleased with how well you do in science. Although we could see that you make good progress in English and mathematics, we know that standards could be even higher. We have asked your teachers to give you more feedback in their marking so that you know exactly how well you are doing and what you need to do next to improve.

You all seem to care well for each other and those of you who are 'buddies' to the younger children in Reception do a good job in helping them to settle well into school. Parents told us it makes a great deal of difference to their children knowing there is a 'special friend' to look after them during their first days and weeks in school.

You know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. The school council is good and you enjoy extra responsibility particularly when you make a difference to your school.

We do hope you continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Best wishes

Dave Shearsmith

Lead inspector