



# St Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School Aided

Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 108621  
**Local Authority** North Tyneside  
**Inspection number** 288142  
**Inspection dates** 4–5 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Derek Neil HMI

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary            | <b>School address</b>   | Bardsey Place                   |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary aided    |                         | Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 3–11               |                         | Tyne and Wear, NE12 8NU         |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b> | 0191 2007425                    |
| <b>Number on roll (school)</b>            | 188                | <b>Fax number</b>       | 0191 2007482                    |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body | <b>Chair</b>            | Cllr Eddie Darke                |
|   |                    | <b>Headteacher</b>      | Mr Stephen Fallon               |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 May 2002         |                         |                                 |

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|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

St Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School is situated in the Longbenton ward of North Tyneside.

The attainment of children when they start school in the Nursery and in Reception is well below average. All pupils use English as their first language. A high number is eligible for free school meals. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. In the past three years the school has suffered disruption caused by staffing difficulties and a budget deficit. A new headteacher took up post in September 2005.

## **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. The staff know its strengths and weaknesses very well; inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are well cared for by staff and feel safe. They behave well in class and around the buildings; show care and consideration for others; and demonstrate a good understanding of Christian values. A significant minority, however, have poor attendance, despite the school's efforts, and this slows down their progress.

The new headteacher has provided strong leadership in his first year. He has made extensive improvements based on a thorough and rigorous analysis of the school's needs. Staff fully support and understand the changes. They are committed to bringing about further improvement. Parents understand what the school is trying to achieve. The quality of teaching has improved and is now good: pupils are making more rapid progress as a result. This is because all teachers plan their lessons well, have high expectations and provide good advice to pupils on how to improve their work. Changes to the organisation and management of the Foundation Stage have led to good provision for the youngest children.

Many of the changes are too recent to have had a long-term impact. The rate at which pupils make progress is satisfactory and improving. In Key Stage 2 it is good. However the standards pupils' reach, though improving, remain below average. This is partly because their poor grounding in basic literacy and numeracy skills remains an impediment to learning. Most notably, pupils' writing skills are not as well developed as they should be.

Effective leadership and management lie behind the school's recent successes and have accelerated progress since the last inspection. The school's capacity for further improvement is good. However, subject leaders do not yet play a full part in raising achievement across the school, and governors do not fully understand how to hold the school to account.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase attendance rates.
- Improve the quality of pupils' writing.
- Enable subject leaders and governors to play a full part in managing and improving the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Following recent changes to the way these classes are organised, pupils are now making good progress in lessons. However, the school has rightly recognised that pupils have not

yet learned some basic social and academic skills and this is holding them back. The standards they attain by the time they are seven remain below average, although they are improving. Very few pupils reach the expected standard in writing, and more able pupils do not achieve their potential in reading, writing or mathematics.

In Key Stage 2, most pupils make good progress and by the time they are eleven the proportion who reach the expected level in English, mathematics and science is almost average, although few of the more able pupils reach higher levels. A poor grounding in some basic skills is affecting how well many pupils in this key stage achieve. Year 3 pupils, for example, do not know their five-times table securely. Many find mental arithmetic difficult. Pupils' handwriting is neat and well formed, and they use exciting words in their stories, but their achievement in English is limited by weaknesses in punctuation, paragraphing and their ability to structure their writing.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the high level of well planned support they receive.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Most pupils enjoy school. They are keen to please their teachers and respond well to praise. Consequently, they behave well, in and outside lessons, making the school a happy place, where pupils feel safe. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, their knowledge and understanding of other faith systems is superficial because the curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for them to learn about other cultures. Pupils make a contribution to school life by being on the school council, although few can point out its achievements to date. Procedures for dealing with allegations of bullying are effective in maintaining good relationships and in encouraging pupils to have regard for others' feelings. Pupils are proud of their work on display around the school, which testifies to the development of their creative, practical and physical skills. It also demonstrates the school's success in promoting their understanding of healthy lifestyles. In Key Stage 1, pupils lack confidence when working without an adult; they do not make sufficient progress because they need reassurance before moving on with their work. In Key Stage pupils' ability to work independently is much improved. Attendance is below average, despite the school's efforts to improve it. The school has compelling evidence that pupils whose attendance drops below 90% do not achieve well.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good and pupils make good progress in lessons although this has not yet been reflected in the standards they achieve in national tests. The teachers have a sound knowledge of the subjects they teach and explain them clearly to the pupils.

They have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. They use information and communication technology imaginatively to make the lessons interesting and to help pupils to learn. Relationships are good; teachers use praise effectively to encourage the pupils to work hard and to behave sensibly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught well. Their needs are identified accurately and they get extra help from an assistant or from a teacher, and this helps them to understand the lesson.

Teachers mark pupils' work with care and give them very good advice on how they can improve it. They set pupils precise and relevant targets in English and some teachers also do this to good effect in mathematics. About half of the lessons observed by inspectors were particularly good. These involved the class in practical and exciting activities. They also ended with well designed sessions when the whole class considered what they had just learned and what they would be doing next. Sometimes, teachers do not check that everyone has understood their explanations or that the pupils are carrying out the tasks they have been given.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum meets requirements. The need to improve pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills has led to the introduction of a separate basic skills lesson for all classes. It is too early to judge the impact of this initiative. In some lessons the teacher makes good use of the links between different subjects to reinforce pupils' basic skills, for example, by doing simple subtractions in a science lesson. However, these links are not planned systematically throughout the school. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of after, and out-of-school activities, in which many pupils participate. These events provide opportunities for pupils to perform, to compete with other schools, and to contribute to the wider community. For example, they take part in a sponsored run to support medical research. The planning and organisation of activities in the Foundation Stage are good. Its curriculum has been restructured recently, and this has had a positive effect on children's confidence and personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are well cared for. Rigorous procedures, including risk assessments, child protection procedures and health and safety checks, are in place, in an organised and well supervised environment. Playground buddies and prefects help staff to make children happy and safe at play time. Staff know the pupils and their families very well, so they can react quickly to emergencies when necessary. The school provides varied opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning. At present, the level of parental involvement is not as high as the school would wish and this means that some pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Efforts to work with parents to raise attendance, for example, have been unsuccessful. The school takes good account of pupils' and parents' views. For example, the curriculum and timetable were reorganised in response to parents' comments. New assessment procedures have been introduced to guide pupils' academic performance. These are

being used to good effect; teachers provide learners with frequent information about their progress, their potential and the ways they can improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has provided strong leadership after an unstable period, marked by staff absences and budget difficulties. He has stimulated significant improvements in a short time. By carrying out a thorough and rigorous review of all aspects of school life he has accurately identified what needs to be done. He observes lessons and makes excellent, perceptive comments about them which the teachers find helpful. He has introduced wide-ranging changes designed to improve teaching, the curriculum, and assessment. Staff have welcomed the new approaches and share his vision and determination to bring about improvement, as do many parents. Some of the changes have begun to bear fruit; for example, there has been good progress since the last inspection in pupils' attainment and in the quality of teachers' marking. However, it is too early to assess the impact of all these new developments. The significant changes to the way children in the Foundation Stage are taught, for instance, have improved teaching and the progress pupils make in lessons but have not yet had a lasting effect on pupils' social and learning skills. The headteacher has initiated and driven forward many of these reforms. However, he is aware of the need to develop further the roles of other managers in order to improve teaching and learning throughout the school. The governing body gives moral support but does not provide enough challenge to hold the school fully to account.

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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> |
|---|-----------------------|

### 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?  | 2   |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 1   |
| 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>   | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| 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>                           | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |
| 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                                    | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

### 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> | 3 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

<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>                                       | 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   | 1   |
| 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  | 3   |
| 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

The Pupils

St Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School Aided

Bardsey Place

Longbenton

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE12 8NU

7 October 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly into your school. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play; talking about your school with you and your teachers; and looking at your work. Now we want to share with you what we thought.

Here are some of the many things we liked about your school.

- You told us you like coming to school and feel safe there.
- We saw that you were clearly enjoying your lessons, as well as other activities such as playing sports.
- Your behaviour is good. You listen carefully to the teacher in class and you walk around the school in a sensible way, showing consideration and respect for others. You should be very proud of this.
- Your teachers and other staff take good care of you while you are at school.
- You do lots of interesting things in lessons.
- You all know how important it is to eat healthily and take plenty of exercise.
- Your books are neat and tidy. You clearly take great pride in the presentation of your work.

We think you and your teachers could make the school even better and this is what we would like to happen now.

- We would like all of you to come to school as often as you can because when you are absent you are not making progress with your work.
- We have asked your teachers to help you to improve your writing, for example, with better punctuation and paragraphing.
- Your headteacher is working very hard to make this such a good school and we have asked him to show other people how they can help him.

We hope you continue to enjoy the many good things about your school.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools