



# St Benet's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 114244  
**Local Authority** Durham  
**Inspection number** 289848  
**Inspection date** 8 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Linda Buller

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>	St Benet's Way
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Ouston, Chester le Street
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11		County Durham, DH2 1QX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 4105857
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	221	<b>Fax number</b>	0191 4105857
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Father Duffy
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Damian Groark
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is similar in size to primary schools nationally. It is in an area that is above average in terms of social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils who claim a free school meal is lower than the national average. Fewer pupils than nationally have learning difficulties and disabilities. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is about average. Most children are White British with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. On entry to school standards are broadly typical of children of Nursery age.

## 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 in pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils learn well in a caring community based upon the Catholic Christian ethos. They are mature in their thoughts, words and actions. They are mindful of the needs of their peers and strive to reach good standards in their basic skills. Pupils are well prepared for life as responsible citizens. Relationships are very good; this creates an open atmosphere in which pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils enjoy keeping healthy and take a full part in the sporting clubs and events. Parents have mostly positive views of the school. One expressed the view echoed by many others in writing, "The school caters for a child's educational and emotional needs and the children are made to feel secure and nurtured". Pupils enjoy coming to school because the curriculum is good, there are many interesting things to do, and because good care is taken of them. They have an excellent understanding of their place in the world through the many opportunities to take responsibility for their school and wider community.

Achievement is good and standards are above average in Year 6. Provision in the Foundation Stage is working well so that children's schooling gets off to a good start. Throughout the school, teaching and learning are good. Adult support is used to good effect to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Since the last inspection, standards have been at or above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2006, the school met its statutory targets although fewer pupils than nationally reached the higher Level 5. The school is addressing this issue and the more able pupils now are consistently challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable. Expectations of those pupils who are working at levels just above average are not always high enough in younger classes. As a result, they have ground to make up when they reach Year 6.

Leadership and management are good. Through effective analysis of results and the tracking of pupils' progress, the school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The school is having success in rectifying identified shortcomings; for example, the good opportunities that are now provided to improve pupils' writing. There is still more work to be done to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress in all subjects. The school has improved well since the last inspection. Strong leadership, clearly focused plans for improvement and the enthusiasm of all members of staff place the school in a good position to become even better.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers have high enough expectations of all pupils whatever their prior ability so that progress is consistently good through the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and standards are above the national average. Careful attention is given to meeting the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and they achieve well. There is no significant difference in the achievement of girls and boys, or of those of minority ethnic heritage.

From average starting points, children make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage in the Nursery and Reception classes and when they enter Year 1 most attain the goals set for children of their age. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and in the 2006 national tests standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were above average. Although standards at the end of Year 6 were also above average in 2006 the gap between the school's results and those attained nationally narrowed. This is because a small proportion of pupils do not achieve the levels expected in writing and mathematics given their prior attainment. The school has identified that fewer pupils than nationally reach the higher Level 5 and has introduced strategies to bring about improvement. The impact of this work can clearly be seen in current standards: higher attaining pupils are now making good progress. The school has been less successful in ensuring that those pupils who are working at levels just above average make consistently good progress. As a result, a few do not attain the standards of which they are capable.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are developing into confident and articulate citizens who work very well, independently and alongside their peers, and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They enjoy their lessons and attendance is above the national average. They have a very good understanding of cultural diversity and social awareness and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils and staff have successfully created a caring community based upon the Catholic Christian values. Pupils behave very well and show good respect and tolerance for each other. They take an extremely active part in the life of the school, local and international community. They are all fully included in all that the school does and say that their suggestions and views are valued. Through effective partnerships with a variety of experts, they know how to keep themselves safe and stay healthy. One pupil reporting on their first aid training wrote, "The day was packed with fun and laughter but it was also extremely serious and important".

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The warm relationships that teachers establish with pupils underpin learning well. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. They inspire pupils with interesting lessons and pupils are eager to learn. Classrooms are calm and lessons have a clear sense of purpose. Very thorough marking informs pupils of what they have done well and how they can improve their work. Pupils understand when they have achieved their targets and what they need to do next. This is built on well in English when pupils are given time to refine and improve their work. Teachers and support staff work closely together. Learning activities are well planned and structured to meet pupils' different needs. This works particularly well for higher attaining pupils and in the support provided for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are times when teachers' expectations of those pupils whose ability is just above average are not high enough. This leads to a few pupils not achieving as well as they could in writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is being adapted enthusiastically by teachers to make learning more realistic and relevant. This is particularly effective in English. Literacy skills are developed well in other subjects and good use is made of school visits and visitors to stimulate pupils' writing. The curriculum is adapted well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and contributes well to their good progress. In the Foundation Stage, children benefit from an exciting range of practical activities with key skills woven well into indoor and outdoor learning. This practical approach to learning has been extended successfully into Year 1 to ensure that there is a smooth transition and pupils' continued good progress. Currently the mathematics curriculum is heavily focussed on number operations and calculation, with too few opportunities for problem-solving and investigation. A thorough, extensive and well planned programme for pupils' personal development helps them relate well to each other and to get the most out of school. The school pays particular attention to improving pupils' knowledge of the world through extensive international links. Together with a wide range of enrichment activities, this is why pupils say they enjoy coming to school.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff know the pupils well and provide sensitive care and support. As one pupil commented, "There is always a shoulder to cry on". Arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe at school follow national guidelines. Suitable arrangements for child protection and health and safety are in place. New

systems for tracking pupils' progress enable the school to identify those whose learning needs a boost. The information is used well to provide challenge for higher attaining pupils and support for those who need it. Well informed and well deployed teaching assistants are central to providing this additional help.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear vision for the next steps in the school's development. All teaching staff contribute well to leadership and management and are rightly proud of the part they play in leading and monitoring priorities for improvement. School improvement planning has developed significantly since the last inspection and now provides a strong sense of direction towards raising standards. Revamped assessment procedures have given the school a detailed picture of pupils' performance. Through good self-evaluation, the school is accurate in assessing its overall effectiveness; as a result, knows its strengths and areas for development. Effective action has been taken to improve standards in writing. This has been particularly successful in raising the standards attained by more able pupils. This success has not yet extended to ensuring that all those pupils who are working at levels just above average make consistently good progress. The vast majority of parents are happy with the school. The governing body has responded well to recommendations made at the last inspection and is effective in its strategic leadership role and in monitoring the work of the school.

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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?	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

<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	1
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	1

### 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>	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	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**

St Benet's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Benet's Way

Ouston

Chester le Street

County Durham

DH2 1QX

8th February 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your good school. I enjoyed meeting you and the staff. Your contributions helped me to get to know your school in a short time.

It was good to hear how much you enjoy St Benet's and that you are confident that you are well looked after. As one of you said, "There is always a shoulder to cry on". It was great to see how much you care about one another and other people in the world who are not as fortunate as you. Your teachers are working very hard to make your lessons interesting and provide you with good advice on how to improve your work, particularly your writing.

I have asked the school to make sure that all of you have the chance to do work that challenges you to improve. You can help with this by continuing to work hard and doing as well as you can.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector.