

# St Francis Church of England Aided Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114267
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	289858
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Penny Parrish

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	140
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Roger Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stuart Joyce
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Scholars Path Newton Aycliffe County Durham DL5 7HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 300236
<b>Fax number</b>	01325 318690

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average school is in a mixed residential and commercial area. Pupils who attend live in the immediate locality, which is a varied but predominantly disadvantaged community where unemployment is high. Most transfer from the neighbouring infant school. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. Over a third are eligible for free school meals, twice the national average. A high proportion of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, well above the national average. The headteacher was appointed in January 2006 and the deputy headteacher in September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the achievement and standards of all pupils and in the breadth and depth of the curriculum.

Although the school is improving, its current overall effectiveness and value for money are inadequate. Standards are significantly below average and, despite recent positive action by the relatively new leadership team, the achievement and progress of pupils remain inadequate over time. Standards in the school have declined since the last inspection. The school's overall results in national tests for 11-year-olds in English and mathematics have been well below average for the past two years. Results in English have been exceptionally low and the school did not reach its targets in English or mathematics. Standards in science have not suffered so badly, as they are near the national average.

Leadership and management are sound. The recently established senior management team has gained a clear view of what needs to be done. Checking systems put into place are being used effectively to promote improvement. Although assessment systems are largely accurate, there is some over-estimation of how standards are improving because staff are getting used to the new procedures. Nonetheless, there is a strong sense of the school moving forward. Increased support from the local authority has provided additional and effective expertise in the school's quest for improvement. Teaching is improving and is now satisfactory throughout the school. Consequently, inroads are being made into the legacy of underachievement in English and mathematics and the school is showing a sound capacity for further improvement. The introduction of explicit learning targets alongside lists of specific suggestions, such as, for improving writing, gives pupils helpful guidance. However, the marking of pupils' work is not always helpful and most pupils do not know well enough where their successes lie and where they need to improve.

The essential focus on raising standards in English and mathematics has been at the expense of delivering the full curriculum. In addition, the school has faced difficulties with staff absences and changes in subject leaders. There is insufficient depth and breadth in provision across most subjects other than English and mathematics, resulting in pupils not doing anywhere near enough work in other subjects. Consequently, many pupils make insufficient progress in information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils' readiness for the next stage of their education is limited because their levels of attainment and skills are below average.

Most pupils enjoy school and know learning is important. Their behaviour and personal development are satisfactory, and they readily confirm that they feel safe and well cared for in school. A recent project on anti-bullying has given them a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities for others. 'Buddies' operate a mediation system that other pupils value. Pupils know that staff will help with any problems arising in lessons or around the school. As one pupil confidently asserted, 'the headteacher helps us all and always sorts things out'. They are keen to point out their healthy diets at lunchtime and are proud of their healthy tuck-shop. Most enjoy sports and playground activities, knowing these contribute well to a healthy lifestyle. Members of the school council contribute well to improving the provision by establishing new playground activities, for example.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards through improving pupils' achievement and progress in English, mathematics and ICT.
- Increase the depth and breadth of the curriculum by improving the monitoring of its quality and outcomes, especially in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve the marking of pupils' work so that there is a shared understanding of what teachers and pupils need to do to improve learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Pupils enter the school having reached broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics assessments at the end of their Key Stage 1 schooling. Results in Key Stage 2 national tests have been well below the national average in recent years, indicating inadequate progress overall. Although clear signs of improvement are becoming evident in more recent months, standards in English and mathematics remain below average. Standards are broadly average in science but with much achieved through revision activities in Year 6. Pupils' make insufficient progress in other subjects, such as ICT, history and geography, because too little time is spent on them. There is still more to be done throughout the school to help all pupils, including those with specific learning difficulties, to achieve satisfactorily and to progress to the standards expected by the time they transfer to secondary education.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well in class and outside in the playground. A small number of pupils find it difficult to behave well but improve as a result of the school's rewards policy and opportunities to join counselling sessions. Pupils know about staying healthy; they try to eat healthily most of the time and enjoy physical education lessons and playing with games equipment at playtime. Pupils enjoy the day-to-day routines that provide opportunities to take individual responsibilities, such as working as a playground 'buddy' or operating the music system during school assembly. The elected school council is able to make suggestions for improvements to the facilities. Links with the church sharing the same building help pupils to take part in the local community and the school welcomes visitors to extend pupils' cultural awareness. Attendance has improved well since the last inspection and is now at the national average. Although most pupils work sensibly, individually or in groups, and attend school regularly and punctually, their limited basic skills mean that preparation for workplace skills is inadequate overall.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although weaknesses remain with regard to progress over time, evidence in lessons and within pupils' most recent work books shows that learning is now largely satisfactory, and sometimes good. Gaps in past learning are beginning to close and weaknesses in teaching have been tackled well.

Clear objectives for learning are established in lessons, giving pupils a good basis for focusing and judging their own learning. Pupils are well managed, enabling work to proceed at a good pace. Teaching assistants promote the learning of those with learning difficulties enabling them to make satisfactory progress. In good lessons, particular strategies or teaching styles, such as good use of electronic teaching boards or 'number of the week' challenges, encourage pupils' involvement and learning proceeds at a good pace. Although lessons are generally planned with clear efforts to meet pupils' differing needs, teachers do not always use the available information well enough to match the work accurately to what pupils need to learn. The marking of pupils' work is improving but still lacks precision. Pupils are praised for good work and effort but without clear enough indications of their successes and of what should be done to improve further. Challenges set are often too easy. Similarly, the outcomes of the new and more frequent assessment tasks are not always fully analysed. As a result, they are not used to best effect by teachers for tailoring their lesson plans or as a basis for using the reward systems. The untidy presentation of writing by many pupils in Years 3 and 4 is not tackled with sufficient rigour.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 4**

The school is working hard to provide plentiful opportunities for pupils to improve their learning in English and mathematics with signs of improvement now becoming evident. In doing so, however, time for some other subjects has been reduced to inadequate levels. Special weeks organised, such as 'art week' and 'science week', ensure satisfactory progress in these subjects. Physical education is taught regularly so that pupils get appropriate exercise. All other subjects are taught but for insufficient time and in insufficient depth to deliver the full National Curriculum. While the priorities set by the school are generally the right ones, some opportunities are missed, for example, to extend and practise literacy skills in other subjects, such as history and geography. Absence and staff changes mean that there are gaps in subject management which cause difficulties in checking whether the pupils' learning is as intended. Resources are out-dated for ICT and their organisation limits opportunities for teaching and learning. Many pupils choose to join a satisfactory range of clubs for sport and other activities, extending their skills and promoting their personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils readily agree that they feel safe in school and say their teachers are kind. The 'worry boxes' in each class and individual journals provide a sensitive means for pupils to share concerns with staff. Recent reviews of behaviour policies, target-setting and reward systems have reinforced pupils' feelings of security as well as their sense of responsibility for their own behaviour and learning. The visiting learning mentor helps pupils with behaviour difficulties address their feelings through skilled counselling. Sound and improving partnerships with the local authority and other professionals are extending the quality and consistency of support for pupils with learning difficulties. The popular breakfast club gets the day off to a good start for those who choose to attend. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Although most pupils have a sound idea of the focus for their learning, targets set are not always the most pertinent because teachers' marking lacks clarity and rigour. There is more to be done to sharpen and embed the new target setting system to help pupils progress well.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior management team show a united and strong sense of purpose in leading the school forward. Effective systems to check pupils' progress have been established quickly by the new deputy headteacher, providing a clear picture of pupils' underachievement over time but also highlighting recent improvements. The quality of teaching and learning is now reviewed regularly and support has been organised where necessary. Improvement planning is firmly based on a sound understanding of where the school is now and where management wants to take it. Regular checks and guidance by the local authority provide encouragement and confirmation that the school is set on the right path to improve standards in English and mathematics as its first priority. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is fully informed of the current position of the school and working effectively with the new senior leadership team to help take the school forward and, through involvement in the monitoring programme, is in a better position than previously to check on its success. Because strong teamwork has been established, and with senior managers, governors and the local authority fully involved in the improvement process, the school has a sound capacity to improve 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	<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>	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	4

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

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

14 June 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Francis Church of England Aided Junior School,  
Newton Aycliffe, DL5 7HB

Thank you for making me welcome during my recent visit to your school. You answered all my questions carefully and looked after me with kindness. I liked the card from Year 5 wishing me a 'smiley' time!

I especially like these things about your school:

- how hard you and all the staff are working to make your school more successful;
- how well-behaved most of you are in lessons and around the school;
- how happy you seem to be and how confident you are that you can get any help you need.

However, the standards you reach in your work are not high enough because you have not been making enough progress in recent years, so your school has been given a 'Notice to Improve'. This means that inspectors will visit your school again next year to see how you are getting on.

I have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to work with you to improve these areas:

- to continue helping everyone to do better in English and mathematics;
- to make sure that you learn more about all the other subjects that should be on the school timetable and work with computers more often;
- to mark your work very clearly so that you know what you can do well, and to help you and the teachers to understand even better what you need to learn next.

I wish every one of you well for the future. I hope that you will always work hard and enjoy school and all the extra activities it provides.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Penny Parrish

Lead inspector