



St Georges Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134472
Local Authority Darlington
Inspection number 294134
Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006
Reporting inspector Linda Buller

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Neasham Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Middleton St George, Darlington
Age range of pupils	3–11		DL2 1LD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 332230
Number on roll (school)	279	Fax number	01325 335340
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Andrew Chown
		Headteacher	Mrs Janine Gleeson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	14–15 September 2006	294134

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St George's Church of England Primary School has recently undergone a period of severe turbulence. The school opened in April 2003 following a fire which destroyed the school building, all of its records and pupils' work. It changed its status to a Voluntary Aided Church of England School and teaching took place in temporary accommodation for three years until the new school building opened in March 2006. The school currently serves an expanding village. As a result, numbers are rising and an above average number of pupils enter the school other than at the normal time of entry. The number of pupils who claim a free school meal is lower than average. Fewer pupils than in most schools have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although the number with a statement of special educational need is average. There are also a small number of pupils from a variety of minority ethnic groups.

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 where pupils enjoy their education confident that they are safe and well cared for by staff. Pupils grow in maturity in a vibrant learning atmosphere where they are encouraged to make the right choices in the knowledge that this will enable them to live healthy and active lives. Pupils take their role in helping to shape the future of their school and community very seriously, for example, as school councillors, buddies and as members of the Junior Neighbourhood Watch.

Good teaching leads to good achievement and standards which are above the national average by the time pupils leave Year 6. Good provision in the Foundation Stage means that children now make good progress. High quality resources, particularly for outdoor learning, are used very effectively by staff to engage children and promote dialogue across all areas of learning. This is one of the reasons why children are settled, happy and very eager to learn from a wide range of new experiences. Children were fascinated, for example, when the snails came out of their shells and very interested to find out how snails could see where they were going as they did not seem to have any eyes!

In Years 1 to 6, teachers have a good understanding of the reasons why standards are not higher. They use this information well to set targets for learning and plan lessons which motivate pupils. As a result, progress is good. However, the school's tracking system only takes account of pupils' current attainment when setting yearly targets. No account is taken of prior attainment, and as a result, a few mainly higher attaining pupils do not make the expected progress by the end of Year 6. Teachers are totally committed to working with others to develop a varied and exciting curriculum, for example, the Young Enterprise Scheme. Benefits to pupils' learning include the skills needed to become confident young citizens.

The school's success in continuing to improve standards during a period of severe disruption is due to good leadership and management. The headteacher and governors have built what is now a strong and stable staff team, providing good capacity to improve further. The school has an accurate view of itself through good systems of self-evaluation. Good leadership by the headteacher has resulted in all staff sharing a strong commitment to the successful implementation of several new curriculum initiatives. Monitoring systems are in the main good, but the school does not yet have a clear view as to the effectiveness of these initiatives in raising standards. What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information more accurately and consistently to identify which pupils need extra support to fulfil their potential.
- When planning new curricular initiatives set clear success criteria in order to measure their impact on standards.

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Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and pupils reached above average standards in the 2005 national tests. The school believes that the upward trend has been maintained in the 2006 test results with a higher percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard. As a result, the school exceeded its targets in English, mathematics and science at the nationally expected Level 4 with the gap between the attainment of boys and girls narrowing significantly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their peers due to high quality support.

Children enter the Nursery with the skills and knowledge typical of their age group. They make satisfactory progress and the majority achieve at the expected level by the end of the Reception year. School data indicates that boys do not achieve as well as girls in the Foundation Stage.

In the 2005 tests at Key Stage 1, pupils reached standards just below the national average. This represented good progress for these pupils because school data shows that attainment for this group of pupils, at the end of the Foundation Stage, was below the expected level. The school's analyses of their 2006 results show a similar picture. Writing remains the weakest element of pupils' work. Recent curriculum initiatives have been partly successful in bringing about improvements with boys in particular doing much better.

Over the period of severe disruption to learning, pupils in Key Stage 2 made satisfactory progress and continued to reach above average standards. Since moving to their new building, pupils are extremely well motivated by improved resources which are used well in teaching that is exciting and challenging. As a result, good progress has been re-established and standards have continued to rise. A few pupils, mainly those of higher ability do not make the expected gains in their learning. This is because data about pupils' prior attainment is not used when tracking their progress. As a result, teachers do not have accurate enough information on which to plan new work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy all that the school has to offer. They greatly appreciate the improvements to their learning brought about by the improved resource of their new school building. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to the exciting activities provided through the school's links with other schools and local experts. They know how to keep themselves safe and can discuss the importance for their future lives, which comes from making healthy choices.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As a result, pupils develop a good understanding of children and adults different from themselves around

the world. Their knowledge of multicultural Britain is satisfactory. Pupils behave well and attend regularly. Through the school council and schemes such as Junior Neighbourhood Watch, pupils play an important part in developing a strong sense of community. As a result, they gain in confidence and share their teachers' view that 'at this school it is cool to succeed'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because teachers plan a wide range of stimulating activities to meet the learning needs of their pupils whatever their ability.

In the Foundation Stage, provision is good with the good interaction between staff and children one of the main reasons why progress is now also good. Staff use the wonderful resources available to them to engage children in exciting, purposeful activities. In Years 1 to 6, teaching maintains a good focus on the school's agreed priorities for raising standards. For example, they have developed a range of strategies and resources to motivate boys, particularly in writing. As a result, the gap between the standards of girls and boys has narrowed.

Assessment of pupils' learning is generally good. This enables the staff to plan effective learning activities that help pupils make good progress. However, weaknesses in interpreting the school's assessment and target-setting data mean that teachers are not always fully aware of pupils' previous capability. As a result, a few pupils do not make fast enough progress to enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable by the time they reach the end of Year 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has been adjusted well to bring about improvements in pupils' learning and as a result, standards are rising. For example, the introduction in some classes of 'philosophy for children' developed alongside other schools in the area has improved thinking skills and led to better standards in writing.

Pupils' personal development has also benefited tremendously from a concentration within curriculum planning on making learning fun and stimulating. In an outstanding lesson in Year 2, pupils were challenged to think for themselves and learn to appreciate the value of others. They did so demonstrating a maturity beyond their years.

Other curriculum initiatives have not been evaluated in terms of their impact on standards. For example, the teaching of pupils in Years 3 to 6 in groups based on prior attainment for English and mathematics has led to good progress for most pupils. However, in some groups higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good levels of care for its pupils. Procedures for safeguarding children follow government guidelines and are implemented thoroughly and consistently by staff. When developing the new school, careful attention was paid to health and safety issues. As a result, pupils choose feeling safe and secure at the top of the list of things they like best about the school.

The support and guidance provided for pupils is satisfactory. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with high quality support by the effective deployment of well trained teaching assistants. As a result, they make the same good progress as their peers. Due to weaknesses in the school's assessment and target-setting procedures the support and guidance provided for other pupils is not always as sharply focused as it could be. The outcome of this is that whilst under achievement is identified some pupils do not always make up the gaps in their learning by the time they are tested at Year 6.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

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Leadership and management are good, consequently standards have continued to rise and pupils' good personal development has been maintained during a period of extreme turbulence. The headteacher, governors and senior staff lead the school effectively in setting clear priorities for improvement. Good systems of self-evaluation provide an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result, several changes have been made to the way in which the curriculum is organised and delivered. Although in the main these appear to be successful, for example, standards in writing are improving, there is no clear view as to how the impact of these initiatives will be measured. Teaching and learning are effectively monitored by senior staff. Good procedures are in place to assess what pupils know and can do, although the effectiveness of the use of the information gathered is variable. Governance is good; governors keep a careful check on provision and standards and share the staff's commitment to raising standards.

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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	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

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 September 2006

To the Pupils of:

St George's Church of England Primary School

Neasham Road

Middleton St George

Darlington

DL2 1LD

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for all the help you gave the inspection team when we came to visit your school. I would like to tell you what we found out.

You have a lovely new school where you all feel safe and enjoy all of the new activities that your teachers give you to do. Your behaviour is good and you all come to school regularly. You do well in your lessons and your writing is getting much better.

By the time you get to Year 6, most of you are reaching above average standards in your English, mathematics and science but we think a few of you could do even better. We have asked your teachers to carefully check that you all do as well as you can and that they give you all the help you need. You can help them with this by always listening to what they ask you to do.

Thank you once again for taking the time to tell us about your school. I hope you continue to enjoy your time at St George's and wish you well for the future.

Linda Buller

Lead inspector