

Nord Anglia Inspections  
Anglia House  
Carrs Road  
Cheadle  
Stockport SK8 2LA

T 0161 491 4191  
F 0161 491 9677

Ofsted helpline  
08456 404045



13 December 2006

Mrs B. Simpson  
St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Church Hill  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 9DN

Dear Mrs Simpson,

**OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WHOSE OVERALL  
EFFECTIVENESS HAS BEEN JUDGED SATISFACTORY**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 December 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information and support which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to those governors and the members of the senior leadership team who gave their time to talk to me and to all the staff who made me feel so welcome in their classrooms. Please convey a special thank you to the many pupils who so cheerfully shared their learning with me.

As a result of the inspection on 30 November 2005, the school was asked to ensure that the teaching stretches the more able pupils and to increase the opportunities for the management team to monitor and improve school provision. In addition to responding to these areas you have also chosen to improve the assessment of pupils and empower governors to be better able to hold the school to account.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

Over the last year a wide ranging re-organisation of the senior leadership team has taken place and members of that team have been effectively supported and developed by both the headteacher and through focused in-service training, notably the 'Primary Leadership Programme'. As a result the current team are cohesive, empowered and confident. Each member has clear responsibilities and accountabilities and has been instrumental in leading one or more significant and successful change. A powerful example is the new integrated system of regular levelled testing, careful tracking of pupil progress, identification of both the underachieving and the most able pupils and detailed planning to meet the learning needs of all groups. This is already

having a measurable and positive impact on achievement across the school and providing particularly good support for the more able and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is also additional provision for those pupils who have been identified as potential underachievers. Other major changes include the successful re-organisation of the Early Years provision and the development of an effective cycle for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the work of the school which links directly to school improvement planning. Currently formal lesson observations are only carried out by the headteacher. This process could be enhanced by the involvement of other staff, particularly members of the senior team.

During my visit I was able to see consistently good planning which, through effective and detailed differentiation, provided very well for the needs of all learners. This was the result of good teaching and the good use of teaching assistants and volunteer helpers. The school has concentrated particularly on improving the level of challenge for the most able pupils and they have responded well to the demands placed upon them. Some are working in groups with older pupils for some of the time and the school plans to create more opportunities for pupils to work in ability related rather than age related groups.

Over the last year there have been a number of changes to the governing body and governors have undergone significant professional development. As a result they are now much better at holding the school to account, particularly in the area of standards and in acting as 'critical friends' to the senior staff. Most governors know the school very well and take an active part in both its spiritual and secular life. Some act as classroom helpers, many accompany trips and visits and link governors regularly visit the school to discuss curriculum issues and observe practice.

Taken together the changes made over the last year have created a framework for raising standards of attainment. The rate at which pupils make progress is accelerating and is at least in line with national expectations. The school is aware that there remains work to be done in order consolidate existing structures and develop additional ones in order to ensure that it can deliver sustainable improvement.

I hope that you have found my visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Chris Penter  
Additional Inspector