

St Paul's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122310
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	302014
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Father Richard Harriott
Headteacher	Ms Felicity Penny
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Doddington Drive Cramlington Northumberland NE23 6DF
Telephone number	01670 713553
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Paul's is a small voluntary aided first school located in an industrial area of Northumberland. The school is subject to re-organisation proposals. It is federated with St Peter's Middle School and St Benet Biscop High School. The middle school and St Paul's operate with one headteacher and legally are two separate schools.

The majority of pupils at St Paul's are of White British heritage, with less than 10% from minority ethnic groups. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Fewer than average pupils are eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Children's skills when they start school are below the levels expected of four-year-olds.

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 achieve well. The care, guidance and support provided are outstanding and ensure that pupils feel safe, valued and happy in school. The support for pupils who are vulnerable is excellent, enabling them to play a full part in the life of the school and benefit from all it has to offer. Teachers know children and families very well; many parents praise staff for how well they care for their children.

Attendance is above average because pupils love coming to school. They enjoy learning and work hard to please their teachers. Pupils' behaviour is good in and out of class and sometimes it is excellent. Pupils learn from the earliest age to take responsibility in the classroom and to take care of each other; they relish making a contribution to the life of the school. Pupils know about healthy living so they eat sensibly and take plenty of exercise. They are well prepared for the next stage of learning and are confident that they can tackle challenges successfully.

Children start school with skills lower than those expected for their age. They make rapid progress in the Foundation Stage to reach the goals set for their learning. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading and writing are above average. Pupils' performance in national tests for the last four years reflects these high standards. In mathematics, progress is slower than in reading and writing and standards are average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and attain broadly average standards.

Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress overall from their starting points when they join the school. Teachers use a range of methods to involve pupils in their learning. They set targets for pupils in each lesson which spurs pupils on to work hard. In Years 3 and 4, teachers do not always use assessment effectively, which results in some pupils making slower progress as a result of not being sufficiently challenged.

The curriculum is rich and well planned to meet pupils' needs. There is a wide range of planned visits and activities each year and visitors to the school add a further dimension to pupils' learning. A good range of school clubs gives pupils plenty of choice and the opportunity to develop special interests. Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good. It ensures that children make good progress in their learning, develop self-confidence and learn to be independent from an early age.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The school maintains a strong focus on raising standards and improving the quality of provision. Senior staff have worked well in the current year to prepare for the changes associated with re-organisation. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in improving attendance, developing the curriculum and the quality of care and guidance, and in maintaining pupils' good achievement. The school makes effective use of all available resources and manages finances well to provide good value for money. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in mathematics so that pupils' achievement matches that in reading and writing.
- Improve the use of all teachers' assessment in Key Stage 2 so that work set for pupils is challenging enough and enables them to make faster progress.

Achievement and standards Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are average. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Children join the school with skills below those expected for four-year-olds. They make rapid progress in the Reception class and nearly all reach the goals set for them in all areas of learning, and some exceed them.

By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. School data and inspection evidence indicate that pupils make good progress overall, and that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress against their targets because of high quality teaching. The school's data, supported by inspection evidence, for the current Year 2 cohort indicate that there has been some improvement in attainment in mathematics for the most able pupils.

Standards at the end of Year 4 follow a similar pattern to Key Stage 1. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, though it is usually better in reading and writing than in mathematics. Pupils in Key Stage 2 who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and progress at the same rate as other pupils.

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Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and feel they are treated fairly. Pupils feel safe and happy in school; their enjoyment of learning is reflected in attendance figures, which are above average. In lessons and around the school, behaviour is good; in some classes it is excellent. Pupils know that misbehaviour will be dealt with robustly and appreciate the school's reward system, based on 'Got It!' stickers. Year 4 pupils become 'Pals', offering support and friendship to younger pupils. Pupils are aware of health issues and demonstrated good practice when dealing with 'mini-beasts' in a science lesson when they put on plastic gloves before handling them. They take part enthusiastically in exercise and many are members of extra-curricular sports clubs. Pupils have very good relationships with each other and co-operate well in the classroom. Their contribution to the local and wider community is shown

in a range of fund-raising activities, work with a local environment group and many links to parish life. They are well prepared for the next stage of school life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and occasionally outstanding. In the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, teachers have a very accurate knowledge of pupils' learning. Good use of this information ensures that pupils are able to work independently and at a good pace. Where teachers' assessment of learning is not as sharp, as in a minority of lessons in Years 3 and 4, the pace of learning slows to satisfactory, because not all pupils are fully challenged. In all classes, teachers share learning targets with pupils at the start of the lesson. This encourages pupils to work hard and gives them a good sense of achievement at the end of lessons when they realise they have been successful.

Good questioning by teachers helps to develop pupils' thinking; for example, careful questioning by the teacher helped older pupils acquire a good understanding of their Tudor topic. Teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards to demonstrate and model ways of working. This increases the pace of learning and makes it interesting for pupils. Skilled teaching assistants work closely with teachers to plan and support the learning of any pupils who need additional support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good; it offers a wide range of well-planned activities. It is well adapted to respond to pupils' needs and interests; for example, through regular theme weeks such as Creative Week. There are a number of enhancements to enliven learning; such as, work on thinking skills, which creates good opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas and develop their spoken English. During the inspection, two Filipino visitors introduced Foundation Stage children to a different culture, offering the chance to sample food and take part in traditional dancing. Parish links enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development. Outside of the classroom, there is good provision for other activities, particularly through the local School Sports Partnership, but also in music, where Key Stage 2 pupils have the opportunity to take instrumental music lessons. Pupils also work with a local environment group. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very well planned to meet the needs of individuals and provides a very good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care provided by the school is outstanding. Highly committed staff create a caring climate in which pupils feel valued and supported. Well-established induction procedures and excellent links with the pre-school provision ensure that the strengths and needs of all children are identified and catered for in the Foundation Stage. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress academically and excellent progress in their personal development. This is because of the excellent learning support provision, and well-established links with parents and outside agencies. There is a good number of well-trained support staff, which ensures that pupils always have an adult to turn to. Child

protection procedures are clearly set out and understood by staff, and arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. The 'Keep an Eye On' system alerts all staff to pupils who need particular attention. Guidance for learning is good. Pupils are well informed about their progress in school; they know their targets for learning and how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good at all levels. School evaluation accurately identifies the correct priorities for improvement. Core subject leaders, including the Foundation Stage leader, make a good contribution to school development through their rigorous monitoring of standards and progress. Despite significant changes to staffing and preparation for the forthcoming re-organisation, the school remains well focused on improving the quality of provision and the support it provides to include all pupils. The senior leadership team has devised effective strategies to extend the expertise of subject leaders in preparation for their new roles.

The new joint governing body is supportive and is beginning to make links to monitor the work of the school at first hand. Although a few parents would like to be better informed about proposals concerning re-organisation, there are very good links with parents to support pupils' learning and parents value the outstanding care the school provides for their children.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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	3
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?	1

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.

Annex A

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	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

21 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Paul's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Northumberland, NE23 6DF

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. You gave us a lot of help to get to know about your school and the lovely things you do there.

First of all, we noticed that you work hard and enjoy your lessons. This is helping you to do well in your learning, though we think that you can do a little better in mathematics. Also, in some lessons in Key Stage 2, I have asked the teachers to make sure your work is always challenging enough. You are kind and considerate to each other and give each other good support in the classroom and the playground. It was lovely to see how well older pupils look after younger ones so that you all feel safe and happy in school. You told us that your teachers care for you very well too, and we agree. They work hard to get to know you really well so they can spot when you need help or a bit of extra kindness. You also know a lot about staying healthy and safe, and it was good to see the lively games you enjoy at playtimes. You are all learning to be good citizens by taking on jobs to help your school run smoothly and improve, and by raising money for people who need help.

You told us that you love lessons because they are fun and your teachers help you to be successful. We agree and know that your teachers plan plenty of interesting activities, including taking you on trips out of school and bringing in visitors to make your learning more lively and practical.

We are pleased to tell you that your school is a good one. You could help it get even better by trying harder with your mathematics.

Thank you again for making our visit such a happy one. Our very best wishes to you all for the future

Yours sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick and Mr Colin Dixon

Inspectors