

St Oswald's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108384
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	309676
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mary Gibson
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Wallace
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	Easington Avenue Wrekenton Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE9 7LH
Telephone number	0191 4878641
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school set in an area of high social and economic disadvantage. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is double the national average. The proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average, whilst the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The skills and attainment of children when they start in the Nursery are very low compared to what is typical for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where the Christian foundation pervades every aspect of its work.

Pupils' achievement is excellent because all pupils make very good progress in their learning no matter what their starting points. By Year 6, standards are above average in reading, mathematics and science and close to average in writing. Results in national tests since the last inspection reflect these high standards.

Pupils love coming to school and enjoy all that is provided for them. Their outstanding personal development makes a huge impact on their learning. For example, pupils' excellent behaviour and relationships make classrooms happy, secure places in which to learn. Pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. They quickly develop the confidence to become independent learners who can think and act for themselves. Pupils in all classes relish the responsibilities they are given through a variety of 'jobs' in school and are keen to put forward ideas to make the school even better. By the time they leave, pupils in Year 6 are mature, tolerant and caring young people who are very well prepared for the future.

Pupils make rapid progress in their academic and personal development because the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support they receive are all excellent. Teachers are relentless in their search for new opportunities to excite and motivate pupils to learn. They rigorously assess pupils' learning and use this information to provide a good level of challenge for every pupil regardless of their ability. Teaching assistants give very good support to pupils who need it, so that they too learn at a good rate. Teachers have a very good understanding of the best methods to use to motivate pupils to work hard and ensure they are successful. Pupils love to work with a partner, develop ideas through talk and find out for themselves through the many practical activities they do. Classrooms buzz with the excitement of learning and the pace is brisk. This high quality learning is based on teachers' determination to overcome any barriers pupils may have and their dedication to providing the best for every individual. The high quality care and support that adults provide make pupils feel safe and valued and eager to succeed to please their teachers. Parents appreciate the care shown to their children and praise teachers highly for being approachable, supportive and for giving freely of their time to sort out any difficulties.

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher's inspirational leadership promotes very high levels of enthusiasm and commitment in all who serve the school. Morale is very high, teamwork is exceptional, with staff and governors collaborating to make optimum use of specialist skills, resources and partnerships. The school's self evaluation pinpoints precisely what needs to be done so that school priorities for improvement are relevant. Leaders are ambitious. They want pupils to succeed so they set challenging targets where the expectation is that from very low starting points pupils will reach the expected standard by age 11. Given the track record of improvements made, the school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is excellent. When children start in the Nursery, many have poorly developed speech, language and social skills. Teaching and planning are excellent. Adults provide extremely high levels of care and support for children so that they quickly develop confidence and independence. There is a strong focus on the development of social and personal

skills so that children soon learn to share and take turns. The result is that children feel safe and happy and make excellent progress, though many do not reach the goals set for most areas of learning by the end of Reception. The assessment of children's learning through close observation is exemplary. Teachers put this information to very good use in providing challenging and stimulating activities for children. Children in the Reception class are exceptionally well supported to improve their literacy skills. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed, teamwork is excellent and very good use is made of staff expertise. Parents are delighted with the start their children have and with the rapid rate of their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing to match those in reading and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is excellent. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make very good progress from low starting points so that by the end of Year 2 many, though not all, reach the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to make very good progress throughout Key Stage 2, especially in reading and science and in mathematics, where progress for some pupils is excellent. Progress in writing is slower, though the school has made great strides this year in identifying specific weaknesses in the subject. This has led to good improvement in standards of spelling, punctuation and presentation through well planned, daily programmes for all pupils. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to meet challenging targets in national tests which would place the school well above anticipated average levels in reading, mathematics and science and broadly at expected levels in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to others and often reached the expected standard for their age by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. Pupils say they feel safe and happy in school because all adults are kind and caring towards them. They copy the excellent example set by adults and show kindness and consideration towards each other. Excellent relationships support pupils to learn very well together. Behaviour is hard to fault. Pupils enjoy learning so much that they have no time for distractions. They enjoy taking on responsibility for improving the school, raising funds for charitable causes and entertaining in the local community. The school council is making great strides in improving playground facilities and pupils are rightly very proud of their achievement in winning funds for new projects. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and look after their personal safety. All of these qualities, combined with their good basic skills, prepare pupils very well for the next stage of learning. The good attendance of the vast majority is reduced by the poor attendance of a few pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding and makes the most significant contribution to the very good progress pupils make. Pupils often make rapid progress because their learning builds well on previous tasks. They know exactly what they are expected to do because lesson objectives are communicated clearly to them. Pupils are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about their own progress as a result of teachers' diligent assessment of daily learning. Other teaching strengths include very good subject knowledge. Teachers are adept at grasping opportunities for pupils to acquire basic skills through the learning of other subjects. Teachers are skilled in providing many opportunities for pupils to improve their conversational skills by encouraging them to talk to a partner, solve a number problem together or collaborate in a science experiment. Their very good methods help pupils acquire key skills that prepare them very well to cope with life ahead. Pupils love lessons, they enjoy singing the alphabet, acting short drama sequences and probing how advertisements influence shopping habits. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to the learning process because they are well briefed by teachers and encourage pupils to 'have a go' so they enjoy the success of doing work by themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Curriculum provision is excellent. It is very well planned to meet the wide range of pupils' needs, as well as develop their special interests and talents. There is a strong focus on key skills and provision for these is very good overall. Links between subjects are well planned so that pupils have opportunities to apply their learning to new situations. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good and allows pupils to develop a clear understanding of the importance of healthy living, good relationships and how to stay safe. The school seizes every opportunity to extend pupils' learning through exciting visits both locally and further afield. There are residential visits for outdoor, adventure learning and visits to France to allow pupils to practise their skills of speaking French. Provision for out of school clubs is plentiful and varied, meeting the interests, enthusiasms and needs of pupils extremely well.

Provision for music is excellent. Over 30% of pupils in Key Stage 2 are members of the school orchestra and have frequent opportunities to perform. The choir, which includes all Key Stage 2 pupils, reaches exceptionally high standards and is in regular demand in the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Child protection, safeguarding and risk assessment procedures are in place and meet requirements. The day-to-day procedures, supervision of pupils and attention to their personal needs includes exemplary practices, such as strict supervision of the administration of medication. Parents rate the school's attention to their children's care highly and praise the way teachers support children and their families. Support for vulnerable pupils is exceptionally good because their specific needs are quickly identified and provision is matched very well to them. Intervention programmes and access to specialist facilities such as the Rainbow and Movement Rooms ensure pupils make noteworthy gains in

their personal and academic progress. Pupils and their parents benefit from the school's excellent partnerships with front line services and specialist agencies.

Academic guidance is exceptionally good. The school's assessment practices are exemplary. These begin with illustrated portfolios of progress in the Foundation Stage and build into comprehensive individual records. Pupils receive timely advice on what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and direction for the work of the school. Her unremitting drive and determination to overcome any barriers to pupils' achievement have resulted in a highly effective and inclusive school. The school fully meets its aims for academic and personal development by significantly improving pupils' self-esteem. They have a positive self image, take pride in their achievements and reach their maximum potential. This comment from one parent is typical of many received. 'My child loves going to St Oswald's school. He has grown in confidence since starting there and I am more than happy with all aspects of the school.' Important outcomes of the excellent leadership are pupils' very good progress as they move through the school, success in raising standards in reading, mathematics and science, improvements to resources, especially those for the Foundation Stage, and placing inclusion at the heart of the school. Governors have a very detailed understanding of the school, they undertake practical tasks and, like other leaders, are passionate for the school to address successfully all pupils' needs. School leaders have agreed priorities for further improvement that are founded on a clear, shared vision gained through very effective consultation.

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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	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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

1 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Oswald's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Tyne and Wear,
NE9 7LH

Thank you all for making our recent visit to your school so interesting and enjoyable.

We would like to share with you the things that you helped us to find out about your school. First, we are delighted to tell you that your school is outstanding. We know that some of you already knew that, but now everyone else does too. There are many reasons why the school is so very good and a lot of them have to do with you. Your kindness, consideration and hard work all help everyone to learn really well. Your excellent behaviour and love of learning give your teachers every chance to make the most of your time in school and they certainly do. You told us that lessons were fun and we were lucky enough to see that for ourselves. Your teachers plan exciting and interesting activities so that you are always busy and are learning very well, sometimes without even realising that you are.

It was really good to see how you all take on jobs to make the school run well and have plenty of suggestions for the school council to make the school even better. Congratulations to the school council for winning that huge cheque to help you make improvements to the playground, and for encouraging you all to recycle and care for the environment. We were pleased to find out how well you understand the need for a healthy diet and how to stay safe. Some of you told us that adults take very good care of you, so you always feel safe and secure in school. We agree. They take the trouble to know you and your families very well and give help and support whenever it is needed. They are always looking for ways to help you to learn better and to make your school a lovely place to learn.

The only thing that your school needs to work at to help things get even better is your writing, and your headteacher and teachers had already decided on that before our visit. You can help with this by working as hard as you do now and by reading whenever you get the chance, because then you can learn from other writers how to be successful. We couldn't end without a very big thank you to the school choir. Your singing is superb, and we know that takes a lot of very hard work and determination. It is truly worthwhile because you bring so much joy to the people who hear you. No wonder you are invited to so many places to share your lovely music. Thank you all once again. It made our visit even more special.

Our very best wishes to you and all the adults who work with you for a happy and successful end to the school year!

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick and Derek Sleightholme