

St George's RC Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 108499 |
| Local Authority | Newcastle upon Tyne |
| Inspection number | 309709 |
| Inspection dates | 19–20 June 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Yvonne Clare |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 101 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr David Archibald |
| Headteacher | Mrs Christine McCullough |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 June 2005 |
| School address | Bell's Close Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE15 6XX |
| Telephone number | 0191 2675677 |
| Fax number | 0191 2675677 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St George's is a smaller than average Roman Catholic primary school. There are more pupils who are entitled to free school meals than found nationally, but fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language. There are more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than average, including pupils with a statement of special educational needs. More pupils enter and leave the school during the school year than is usual. The school serves an area of high social and economic deprivation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Its strengths lie in the good quality of pastoral support and care for pupils, the pupils' good levels of personal development and the provision of many extra-curricular clubs. Its partnerships with others are good and this enhances the provision for pupils well. The school is very caring and makes sure that pupils are safe, secure, and receive good quality personal support and guidance, although academic guidance is satisfactory. The school is friendly and welcoming, with artwork providing a bright, colourful learning environment. Parents are supportive of the school and they are rightly confident that their children are well cared for and enjoy school. One parent, representing the views held by many, remarked that, 'There is a strong and caring ethos in the school and pupils do look out for one another.'

Achievement for all pupils, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. Teaching assistants, supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do this work well, ensuring these pupils are fully involved in activities and make similar progress to their classmates. From starting in Reception with skills that are below those typical for their age, learners make satisfactory progress through the school. The small size of each year group means that standards vary from year to year. In 2007 in Year 2 the standards in the national assessments were near to average in writing and mathematics but below average in reading. In Key Stage 2, standards over time are below average; in 2007 the school's results in the national tests were significantly below the national average. The school is taking effective steps to raise attainment. School data and evidence in pupils' books show standards to be rising and creeping closer to average in Year 6. A recent focus on writing has ensured standards in English have continued to improve. Progress, particularly in upper Key Stage 2, is accelerated and pupils are expected to meet their challenging targets by the end of Year 6. Recently introduced tracking and assessment systems enable pupils' progress to be monitored for any potential underachievement.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and manage them well. Pupils are happy in lessons and their behaviour and attitudes are usually positive. Where teaching is good pupils know what they are going to learn in the lesson, there is a brisk pace and pupils of different abilities are challenged. This good practice is not yet consistent enough and in too many lessons teaching does not take sufficient account of the assessment of the pupils' abilities. Some groups of learners, most noticeably the more able pupils, are not consistently challenged. These variations in teaching reduce pupils' progress and achievement.

The satisfactory curriculum meets all statutory requirements. It is enriched by a wide range of clubs, trips and visitors that benefit pupils' learning. The school provides well for pupils' personal development and successfully develops in them a good understanding of the choices required to stay healthy and safe. Contributions to the community are good. Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities around the school. They are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They implement strategies to improve the school's provision but do not monitor them regularly to evaluate whether they are helping the pupils to do as well as they can. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and demonstrates sound capacity for further improvement. It gives satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children have a secure start in the Foundation Stage and provision is improving. Sensitive induction arrangements assist in establishing a strong partnership with parents; they help children to settle quickly by encouraging them to feel confident and safe. The children's levels of development when they start Reception are below those typical for their age, although the whole range of abilities is evident. Recent good initiatives have ensured that reliable assessment procedures for each area of learning are now in place. The school now has more reliable data in order to judge progress, which is satisfactory. Children move to Year 1 with standards that are slightly below the level expected for their age. Appropriate use of the internal space and resources offer a wide variety of activities. In some cases, children spend too long in whole-class sessions. The introduction of new curriculum strategies is having a positive impact on children's personal development, and on their speaking and listening skills particularly. An exciting outdoor environment has been created and outdoor activities are planned for; however this is far away from the classroom and therefore cannot be accessed independently by the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in relation to the use of assessment, so that all pupils are consistently challenged.
- Extend the monitoring role of leaders to enable them to evaluate the impact of improvement strategies on standards and achievement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Although standards are rising they remain below average. Children maintain the secure foundations laid in Reception and by the end of Year 2 reach standards close to average in mathematics and writing but below average in reading. The small numbers of pupils in each cohort, at both key stages, mean that standards can appear to fluctuate from year to year, but taken over time, the school has reliable evidence to show individual pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 6. The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 over the last few years show pupils performed less well in mathematics and science than they did in English. The school has recognised this and taken action to improve these subjects alongside the successful focus on reading and writing. Currently, Year 6 pupils are on course to meet their challenging targets in English and mathematics, reversing the decline in mathematics over recent years. Standards are rising and getting closer to average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Knowledge of their own and European cultures is well developed, but their knowledge of other cultures is limited. Relationships with adults are good and pupils,

on the whole, display positive attitudes towards one another. They enjoy school, particularly their work in art and computers and the range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Their pleasant demeanour around school confirms this. Behaviour in school is satisfactory. Although in most contexts behaviour is good, there is a small amount of inappropriate behaviour. In the main, pupils say they feel safe and are confident that, should bullying occur, it is dealt with swiftly. Pupils are confident that there are adults to turn to if they need support. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of the choices required to lead healthy and safe lives. The school council is effective and its work has resulted in new play equipment. Pupils are confident to offer ideas through the suggestion box open to all. Their progress in developing these skills helps to prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of schooling and their future. Pupils raise funds for charity both locally and further afield and are actively involved in the local community, for example in their carol singing and in their sports activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and this is reflected in the satisfactory progress pupils make. There are good working relationships in all classes. Pupils are happy and their behaviour and attitudes are usually positive. A minority of lessons seen were good. In such lessons teachers provide challenging tasks, a brisk pace and a good range of techniques to make learning enjoyable. Planning takes account of previous learning and assessment to ensure that activities meet the needs of different groups of pupils effectively. It gives a clear, shared focus and success criteria, enabling pupils to know what is expected of them and how they can improve. This good practice is inconsistent through the school, resulting in a slower pace to learning. Where teaching is less than good, expectations are not always high enough, the lesson is mainly teacher-led, and pupils are not sufficiently challenged or involved. The teaching in some subjects relies on worksheets too much and pupils have too few opportunities to transfer their basic skills in other areas of the curriculum or to initiate their own learning.

The quality of marking varies between classes and between subjects, marking in English being the most firmly established. At its best, it gives good guidance about how pupils can improve their work. Pupils are not always involved enough in evaluating their own progress and guidance about how they can improve is inconsistent. The inconsistencies in teaching reduce the achievement of pupils and the standards they reach.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is beginning to develop more links across subjects and the curriculum is currently satisfactory, meeting all statutory requirements. There is an appropriate concentration on English and mathematics. Work with consultants and a consistent school approach to calculation and mental strategies are enhancing pupils' learning and building confidence well. Provision for science is improving now the school has a clearer picture of pupils' needs. Information and communication technology is also well provided for and all classrooms benefit from interactive whiteboards, which enhances the curriculum well. Physical activity and links through the sports partnership provide valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide variety of sports. Pupils learn Italian and this, together with the practical experiences in the form of trips, visits

and visitors, brings topics to life. The curriculum runs over a two-year cycle which successfully avoids repetition of topics for the mixed-age classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and there is a strong caring ethos in the school. Relevant procedures for safeguarding pupils and for ensuring their health and safety are in place. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they have a problem. Academic guidance is satisfactory, but its quality is hindered by variations in approaches to assessment and in the use of assessment in informing planning. Targets are set for literacy and numeracy, but some pupils are unsure of them. The systems to allow pupils to evaluate their own learning are used inconsistently. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are satisfactory and are used to target additional support. The good links with outside agencies, parents and other schools enhance personal development well and the parent workshops enable parents confidently to support the school in the education of their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, including governance are satisfactory. School improvement planning correctly identifies the school's current needs. The headteacher, with the help of a newly extended leadership team, has begun to introduce new approaches to raise standards and increase achievement. However, day-to-day practice is not yet consistently embedded across all classes for the school to meet its aspirations.

The quality of the school's self-evaluation is good, displaying good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas needing to be better. Strategies are implemented to improve provision based on this evaluation and are starting to show benefits, such as the improvements in pupils' writing. However, the school does not regularly evaluate the impact of its actions on pupils' standards and achievement. Subject leaders vary widely in experience, but are conscientious and starting to undertake monitoring of their subjects. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and the school has a sound capacity for further improvement.

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

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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

23 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's RC Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne,

NE15 6XX

Thank you for making me so welcome in your bright and happy school and for your help during the recent inspection. I loved seeing all your displays and thought how colourful they made your school look.

I thought most of you behaved well and were kind to each other. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school. Yours is a satisfactory school, which does well in giving you lots of trips and Italian lessons which broaden your experience of life. You told me that you like school and enjoy your lessons as well as the clubs, visits and visitors.

You are proud of the play equipment that you have got through your school council. You certainly know a lot about staying safe and being healthy. You also care for each other very well and enjoy the jobs and the library duties your teachers ask you to do.

The staff work hard to help you do your best and all of you work as a team. I have asked them to help you to do even better in your literacy, numeracy and science by using what they know about you to give you work that extends what you already know, and by giving you tasks that really make you think hard. They will also be checking carefully when new things are introduced to make sure that they are helping you to improve.

It was a pleasure to visit your school. Keep working hard and come to school regularly, so that you do even better. I do hope you continue to enjoy school and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Best wishes

Yvonne Clare

Lead inspector