

St Clare's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111703
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	310667
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Geraldine Rodgers
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Fall
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Trimdon Avenue Middlesbrough TS5 8RZ
Telephone number	01642 815412
Fax number	01642 815525

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work, assessment information, documents, interviews and discussions. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, the curriculum, leadership and management. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Clare's is an average sized primary school, recently housed in a new building. It serves mainly Catholic families who mostly come from the south west of Middlesbrough, a locality where socio-economic characteristics are broadly average. The number of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average. Almost all pupils are from a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. The school has the gold standard of the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Clare's provides an outstanding education for its pupils. The clear direction given by the headteacher, the very effective leadership of the senior management team, and the way that all staff successfully promote the school's mission and Catholic values all contribute to the school's success. Care and consideration for others prevail throughout the school and there is a clear philosophy that every child does matter. Pupils' academic achievement is outstanding and their personal development too is excellent.

Parents have every confidence in the school and their trust is fully justified. Although a very small minority feel their views are not considered, the overwhelming majority of parents find arrangements entirely effective and hold the school in the highest regard. One parent's comments sum up the views of others: 'St Clare's stands for everything I could wish for with their Every Child Matters agenda. The teachers are genuinely interested in each child and I have seen my two children grow in confidence and self-esteem, and this is reflected in their learning'.

Pupils achieve outstandingly well throughout Key Stage 1. In recent years, they have always reached very high standards; their reading, writing and mathematics results were significantly above the national average in the 2007 Year 2 assessments. Pupils made exceptionally good progress in mathematics as a result of determined development work since the previous inspection. Pupils in Year 6 also achieved very highly to attain very high standards overall in the 2007 tests. Of particular note is that these results have also been significantly above average over the past few years. This year, every pupil reached the national expectation of Level 4 in English, mathematics and science, which exceeded the school's very challenging targets, although results at the higher Level 5 did not meet the mathematics target. Pupils currently in Year 6 are making excellent progress in writing and in reading, and good progress in mathematics. Given their starting points, pupils sustain outstanding achievement as they move through the school.

An exceptionally wide range of activities contributes to make pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development excellent. Pupils behave impeccably well, both in classrooms and in the communal parts of the school. Their outlook, respect for each other, politeness and courtesy all reflect how well the school helps them develop maturity and confidence. They are fine ambassadors for their school, which town councillors very positively remarked upon when some Year 5 pupils recently visited the council chamber. Pupils are happy, and thoroughly enjoy school and the friendships they make. Attendance is well above average. Pupils know the importance of safe and sensible conduct, and say their school is free from bullying. Their well informed choices at lunchtime, enjoyment of the morning 'wake and shake' sessions, and participation in voluntary sports activities after school all reflect their awareness of fitness and of good health. Pupils make a major contribution to their own and the wider community. The school council helps improve aspects of school life, for example, by successfully promoting the buddy system to foster friendships. The 'Greenfingers' club improves the new school grounds. Charitable activities, many in association with the church, help people locally and in other countries. Year 6 pupils are very well prepared for their future through highly developed basic skills and close partnerships with local secondary schools.

Pupils do exceptionally well because of a particularly effective combination of excellent teaching, a rich experience and wide variety of opportunities throughout the curriculum, as well as the

way teachers track pupils' progress carefully and help improve their personal, emotional and academic development. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly in partnership with teaching assistants so that everyone knows precisely what pupils are expected to learn. Teachers take good account of pupils' different abilities and provide activities that interest and challenge them. Gifted and talented pupils really enjoy the activities that tax their ingenuity. Of particular note is that pupils value highly knowing what is expected of them and the ways they can show what they have learned. They are very well behaved and attentive; they clearly enjoy practical activities and work enthusiastically and industriously. The carefully planned way teachers and support staff skilfully work together ensures those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all take a full part in lessons, often make excellent progress and achieve outstandingly well.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils and values each child as an individual. Excellent liaison with parents and partnerships with the local authority and external agencies, contribute extremely well to support pupils' learning and development. Procedures to safeguard the welfare of pupils meet current government requirements and child protection procedures are in place and up to date. Pupils' work is rigorously assessed at suitable intervals during the year and an exemplary and very useful track record of progress is thoroughly well kept and analysed. Teachers clearly and successfully use their personal knowledge of each child to help those at risk of falling behind, and in turn many have made outstanding progress or sustained high achievement.

The school is outstandingly well led and managed because of the way the headteacher and governors work harmoniously together. They get the best of value from their resources to ensure pupils' outstanding personal and academic achievements. The school has very successfully moved into new buildings since the last inspection. Despite the many difficulties encountered during this time, they have successfully addressed all issues from the last inspection, notably in the exemplary way they improved mathematics standards in Key Stage 1. Senior staff share their perspectives of the school's work with governors, although they are somewhat too modest in judging some of their accomplishments. They have a very clear action plan to raise standards further, especially in mathematics, and a commendable desire to improve learning further for all pupils. Given their track record of sustained outstanding results, and their determination to raise standards even higher, especially in mathematics, their capacity for further improvement is also outstanding. Taking all this into account the school gives excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children join the Nursery with a range of skills, which for many are close to those expected for their age, especially in their communication, literacy and mathematical development. Parents of new starters are delighted with the way their children settle very quickly and enjoy school. Of particular note is the way children follow classroom routines. Because of the outstandingly effective provision in the Foundation Stage, children thrive and make exceptionally good progress. Children are helped to learn very well through a wide range of first-hand activities and experience, both indoors and outside. As a result of a skilful and well-managed blend of direction, supervision and opportunities to explore for themselves, they develop confidence and show interest and enjoyment in what they do. They leave the Reception class to begin Year 1 with very high attainment in all areas of learning, especially in communication and literacy skills, and in their mathematical and personal development. Most exceed the level expected in the early learning goals, which gives them an excellent grounding for their future achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further, especially at the highest level, in mathematics in Key Stage 2.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Clare's RC Primary School, Middlesbrough, TS5 8RZ

I really enjoyed my visit to your school this week. Thank you for helping me when I came into your classrooms to see you at work. You were exceptionally polite and really helpful. I did enjoy talking with those of you on the school council and in Year 4 whom I met. It was great to see how confident you are, and how much you enjoy coming to school. I was especially impressed with how much you contribute to school life. I know the headteacher and the staff are all very proud of you.

Your outstanding school has a very warm and welcoming atmosphere and is exceptionally well organised. I'm pleased that you feel safe and happy because all the adults in the school look after you very well. Many of your lessons are excellent. The way your teachers share what you are going to do in lessons, let you know how well you are doing when they mark your work and how you know how to show what you have learned are impressive. Likewise the way you work really hard and like to take part in lessons, and in all the other activities arranged for you. Last year, pupils in Years 2 and 6 did very well in the tests that everyone has to take. I am delighted with the progress many of you are presently making in writing, and with reading especially. I have asked the school to help those of you in Years 3 to 6 to improve in mathematics so that your work is as good as the very high standards you have reached in reading and writing.

You have very many opportunities at St Clare's Roman Catholic Primary School to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector