

St Augustine's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114240
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	311526
Inspection date	20 September 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Declan McGuckin
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Crawford
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Beechwood Avenue Darlington County Durham DL3 7HP
Telephone number	01325 380819
Fax number	01325 380812

Age group	4–11
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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, curriculum, care guidance and support, and leadership and management. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found much evidence to confirm that the school's own evaluations are fully justified, and these have been included in the report.

Description of the school

St Augustine's is an average size primary school which serves mainly Catholic families who come mostly from the south and west of Darlington, a locality where socio-economic characteristics range widely from well above to well below average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from a White British heritage, but a small number from Poland and Lithuania have recently joined the school and are learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Need, is below average. In recognition of the school's work, it has the Artsmark Gold award, Investors in People award, Healthy School award and the Local Authority Inclusive School 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 Augustine's provides an outstanding education for its pupils. The very effective leadership of the headteacher, ably assisted by her leadership team, and the way that all staff successfully promote the school's caring Catholic ethos, together with a clear philosophy that every child does matter, are amongst the many reasons why this school is so successful. Pupils' academic achievement is outstanding and their personal development too is excellent.

Pupils achieve outstandingly well throughout Key Stage 1. In recent years they have reached very high standards: their reading, writing and mathematics results were significantly above national average in the 2006 Year 2 assessments. In 2007, more pupils than previously reached the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 also achieved very highly to gain standards in the 2006 tests that were significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. Of particular note is that these results have been significantly high over the past few years and have exceeded the school's very challenging targets. At this point in the school year, preliminary analysis shows the 2007 results follow a similar pattern. Given their starting points, pupils make exceptional progress and sustain outstanding achievement as they move through the school.

The many displays of pupils' work in classrooms, halls and corridors show how an exceptionally wide range of activities contribute to make their spiritual moral, social and cultural development excellent. Pupils behave impeccably well, both in classrooms and in the communal parts of the school. Their outlook, care and respect for each other, and politeness and courtesy towards adults all reflect how well the school helps them develop maturity and confidence. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and the friendships they make. Attendance is well above average. Pupils know the importance of safe and sensible conduct, and of good health and fitness. Many now cycle to school and the school was chosen to launch the 'bike-ability' initiative. In addition, many pupils take part in voluntary sports activities after school. Pupils make a major contribution, and help the school enhance the local community. The school council helps improve aspects of school life, for example by successfully promoting healthy snacks at break time. The choir brings enjoyment to people in the town centre at Christmas time, and charitable activities help people locally and in other countries. Year 6 pupils are very well prepared for their future because their basic skills are so well developed and the exemplary transition arrangements to secondary school are used as a model of best practice in the Local Authority.

Parents have total 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 hold it in very high regard. One parent's comments sum up their views, 'My two children... have made excellent progress and have felt well cared for and supported. ...I always feel that the staff know the children as individuals and they have grown in confidence as a result'.

Pupils do exceptionally well because of a particularly effective combination of excellent teaching, a rich variety of experiences and opportunities throughout the curriculum, and the way teachers track pupils' progress carefully and help improve their personal, emotional and academic development. Teachers plan lessons very diligently 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. Pupils know what is expected of them, are very well behaved and attentive, clearly enjoy practical activities and work enthusiastically and industriously. The carefully planned way teachers and support

staff skilfully work together ensures gifted and talented pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all take a full part in lessons and achieve outstandingly well.

The school's outstanding care, guidance and support values each child as an individual. Excellent liaison with parents and partnerships with external agencies, contribute extremely well to support pupils' learning and development. Arrangements to safeguard the welfare of pupils are underpinned by procedures that 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 the track record of their progress is thoroughly well analysed. Teachers' personal knowledge of each child is clearly and successfully used to help those at risk of falling behind, and in turn many have made outstanding progress. Some teachers are sharing targets with their pupils, and in these classes pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what to do to improve. This process works well, although the school recognises it is not used throughout, particularly in classes where teachers are relatively new to the school.

Through harmoniously working together, headteacher and governors ensure the school is outstandingly led and managed. As a result of diligent monitoring, shared with senior staff, they have a very clear perspective on all aspects of its work, although they are somewhat modest in judging some of their accomplishments. They have a very clear action plan to raise standards further, especially in English and mathematics, and a commendable desire to develop the skills and expertise of their young teachers. They get the best of value from their resources to ensure pupils' outstanding personal and academic achievements. They have successfully addressed all issues from the last inspection. Given their track record of sustained excellent results, and their determination to raise standards even higher, their capacity for further improvement is outstanding. Taking all this into account the school gives excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children join the Reception class with a range of skills, which for many are at or below those typical for their age. Because of the outstandingly effective provision in this year, the last of the Foundation Stage, children thrive and make exceptionally good progress. Parents of new starters are delighted with the way their children settle very quickly and enjoy school. Of particular note is the way children quickly learn and follow classroom routines. They begin Year 1 with very high attainment in all areas of learning. Most exceed the levels expected of them, which provides an excellent grounding for their future achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of target setting procedures so that all pupils know how well they are doing and how to take their next steps in learning.

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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	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	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

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

21 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Augustine's RC Primary School, Darlington, DL3 7HP

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 you and I was impressed with those of you whom I met. It was great to see how much you enjoy coming to school and how well you contribute to school life. I know the headteacher and the staff are all very proud of you.

Your school has a very warm and welcoming atmosphere and is very 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 exceptionally good. I was impressed with the way you work hard and take part in lessons and assembly. Some of your teachers often share what you are going to do in lessons and they help you know how well you are doing. I have asked the school to help you do even better by sharing with all of you targets for the next steps you can take so you all know what you have to do to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector