

St William's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114259
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311533
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	David Earley

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	125
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father John Caden (Acting)
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Elwick View Trimdon Village County Durham TS29 6HY
Telephone number	01429 880348
Fax number	01429 881967

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average sized school serves a wide area covering three Roman Catholic parishes, two of which are former mining communities. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British origin. A small number of pupils learn English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Attainment on entry to the Foundation stage (Reception) is generally in line with what is typical for children of this age. The headteacher has been recently appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St William's is a good school. Important factors in its success are the very good relationship between all members of the school community and the determination of staff and governors to provide the best for each pupil. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is excellent. A parent commented, 'St William's is a quiet, gentle and safe place of learning. There is a feeling of good organisation and very happy children.'

Achievement is good. Children start school in the Reception class with levels of development that are generally typical for their age. They make good progress so that by the end of Reception, most children exceed national expectations. Good progress continues in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are usually above average. Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 2 and, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average.

Personal development and well being are good, as are spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure, and know how to lead healthy lifestyles. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being and are articulate and confident. They play a full role in the school and wider community, and have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. There is a very strong Christian ethos throughout the school which is enhanced by the good role models provided by adults.

Teaching is good and this leads to good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to challenge pupils to extend their thinking. Lessons are usually lively and stimulating. In some lessons where the pace drops, the rate of learning becomes slower. Very good use is made of teaching assistants who work closely with teachers to ensure that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities make good progress. A rich and well planned curriculum complements the teaching. There is a good focus on literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) and the curriculum is well adapted to different ages and abilities. It is enhanced by visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. There are good links with outside agencies, including local schools and schools in other countries, to support and extend learning.

Care, support and guidance are good and foster personal development and academic achievement. A key element in the life of the school is the very strong family and Christian ethos. Everyone is valued and extremely well looked after. Most parents are positive about the care shown to their children and are keen to be involved in the life of the school. Government recommendations for safeguarding children are carefully followed. There are effective systems for assessing and tracking pupil progress.

Leadership and management are good, leading to a shared commitment to raising standards and improving provision. The school improvement plan is based on a realistic evaluation of its performance. Although subject co-ordinators have a good understanding of their subjects, their roles in checking teaching and learning and in planning for improvements are underdeveloped. Governors know the school very well. They play an important role in holding the school to account for its performance and in helping to shape its direction.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and the children make good progress. This is because the quality of teaching is good and the curriculum is exciting and stimulating so that children want to learn and are eager to come to school. Children settle in quickly because relationships are very good; they become increasingly confident and independent. There are very close links with families and carers and progress is carefully checked. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure continuity and consistency in the learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more scope for subject co-ordinators to evaluate and develop teaching and learning.
- Ensure that the pace of learning is consistently good in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils, whatever their ability or background, make good progress. Good teaching and learning, good personal development and a well planned curriculum lead to significantly above average standards at the end of Year 6.

Most children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and, by the time they enter Year 1, most exceed the goals set for their learning. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. The 2006 results of the assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were above average and have been significantly above average for the previous four years. The assessments for 2007 were similarly high for reading and writing and slightly lower in mathematics.

In Key Stage 2, the rate of progress is maintained. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2006 were significantly above average in English, mathematics and science, as they were in the previous year. The 2007 results were equally good and the school exceeded its targets. Inspection evidence and school data indicate that good progress and achievement are being maintained, and the school's data shows that pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 are on track to reach above average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. There is a very strong family ethos founded on the school's strong Christian values. This is enhanced by the very good relationships throughout the school which help pupils to increase in confidence and to develop high self-esteem. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they enjoy coming to school, as evidenced by their good attendance. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. They have a good understanding of the importance of exercise and diet in leading a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being because there is a good focus on the development of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, and pupils have many opportunities to take the initiative and accept responsibility. This is enhanced by the work of the school council which makes a significant contribution to the life of the school. Pupils take part in local community activities and they have a good understanding of

their own and other cultures. Through participation in the Comenius Project, there are good links with schools in other countries.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Most pupils are confident and committed learners because teachers make their work interesting and know them well. Good use is made of assessment information to ensure that work is well suited to different ages and abilities in the mixed age classes. Teachers make good use of questions to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage them to explain their answers so that they develop good speaking and listening skills. Lessons are typically lively and conducted at a brisk pace so that pupils work hard and are eager to do well. In a minority of lessons where the pace is slower, the rate of learning is less rapid. Teachers make sure that pupils know clearly what they are expected to learn and check with them how well they have progressed at the end of lessons so that they become more involved in their own learning. Teachers and support assistants work very well together and provide consistently good support for all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is enhanced by a good range of enrichment activities which help to extend personal and academic development. Pupils go on many visits and visitors, such as theatre groups, help to extend learning. Although most pupils have to use transport at the end of the school day, the school provides well attended opportunities for extra-curricular activities, including sport and family foreign language sessions. The curriculum is well planned and a good programme of personal, social and health education gives pupils a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. There is a strong focus on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT and pupils extend their skills by using them in other subjects. There are good links with outside agencies which help to extend the curriculum and this is further enhanced by strong links with schools in other countries.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. This is a very caring school with a strong family atmosphere, where pupils and their families are well known; there are good links between home and school. This ethos is enhanced by the school's place at the hub of the local parishes. A high level of support is provided for all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. This helps to enhance personal development and achievement. Pupils have the confidence to approach an adult should they have a problem and parents speak highly of the care shown by the school. Child protection systems, risk assessments and procedures for safeguarding children are secure.

Academic support and guidance are good. Teachers assess pupils regularly and track their progress in their classes carefully. This is enhanced by the very careful marking of work and the sharing of challenging targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. There is a shared commitment by staff and governors to set challenging targets and to provide the best for each pupil. This has resulted in a rich curriculum, a caring, inclusive school with high levels of achievement and good personal development. The school's improvement plan is based on a thorough assessment of its performance. Subject leaders have a good understanding of their subjects. The school is aware of the need to extend their roles in checking teaching and learning in order to make improvements and to involve them further in strategic planning. Governors know the school very well and are very supportive. They are involved in training to extend their skills. They play an important role by acting as critical friends and helping to shape the direction of the school.

The budget is carefully managed to support the raising of standards which have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The school has a deservedly high reputation in the local community; most parents have positive views of the school and take advantage of opportunities to be involved in their children's learning.

Effective self-evaluation, improvements made since the previous inspection and the commitment of staff and governors to raise standards further give the school good capacity to improve.

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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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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	2
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 Children

Inspection of St William's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham, TS29 6HY

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. You are very polite, helpful and friendly and this helped me to enjoy my visit. I particularly enjoyed talking to you at lunch times, in class and around the school. You answered my questions very well and told me very clearly that you enjoy coming to school because the teachers and pupils are friendly and because you have lots of interesting things to do. I was pleased to hear that you know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy and that you help to care for each other. I think that St William's is a good school and that you and your parents are right to be proud of it. The teachers know you all very well and you are all important to them. They take good care of you and keep a careful check on how well you are doing so that they can help you to do even better.

Here are some of the things your school does well:

- You reach good standards in English, mathematics and science.
- You behave very well, care for each other and the school is like a big family.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and you go on lots of visits to help your learning.
- Teachers and governors work hard together to improve the school.

These are some of the things I would like the school to do even better:

- Give teachers more opportunities to check how well you learn in different subjects so that they can make improvements.
- In some lessons, your teachers will all keep you on your toes a bit more so that you make quicker progress.

Thank you once again for making me so welcome and I hope you grow lots of vegetables in your allotment.

Yours sincerely

David Earley

Lead inspector