

St Chad's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114263
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311536
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Oglesby

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	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Julia Gabriele (Acting Head)
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	The Baltic Witton Park Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 0EP
Telephone number	01388 603632
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pupils travel from several local communities to attend this small village school. The area is part of a regeneration scheme, which includes new private housing. Almost all pupils are White British. About two thirds of the pupils are from Catholic families. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and entitled to free school meals are average. The school is led currently by an acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has earned the fullest support of parents and has a high local reputation typified by comments such as, 'We are extremely pleased with our child's progress and feel this is due to the excellent teaching. The school is very well run and parents are always kept informed. We cannot praise the staff enough.' Pupils are just as positive. They love attending school and make the most of all that it offers. They achieve well academically and their personal development is outstanding.

Leadership is good with strong teamwork and support from all staff and governors. The acting headteacher who took over at the beginning of the year has worked very effectively to maintain the school's strengths and set a clear agenda for improvement. Leaders have an accurate and self-critical view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, based on good assessment and monitoring. This has helped the school to identify relevant priorities and to bring about improvements successfully in recent years, for example, in raising standards in writing and mathematics.

Pupils' achievement is good because teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. By the end of Year 6 standards are above average. Pupils say they are learning well because they like their teachers and enjoy lessons. Teachers work hard to make learning fun. Lessons are busy and purposeful, and provide support where it is needed and challenging work to keep everyone on their toes. The effective work the school does to help improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills has been recognised by the achievement of the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the third time. The school keeps good records of pupils' progress. However, this information does not easily give a view of progress over several years. As a result, leaders have not always intervened quickly enough when some individual pupils or groups have not made the progress they should.

Pupils' outstanding personal development includes excellent spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils show very much respect and consideration for each other and for adults. In this they reflect the good quality of care and excellent relationships that they see every day. They feel very safe and secure in school and have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. They take responsibility well within the school community, for example, in setting up the 'ten minute tuck' breakfast club or fund raising for charities. They are open and courteous towards others and are involved in many aspects of village and church life. Their outstanding personal and social development and secure basic skills in literacy and numeracy help prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

The curriculum is good and has improved since the last inspection. The range of clubs, visits and events is impressive for such a small school and adds much to pupils' enjoyment in learning. Leaders welcome many visitors who add to the breadth of pupils' experiences, for example, in learning French, music or in developing sporting skills. The school's Activemark recognises its good provision for physical activity.

Since the last inspection the school has improved pupils' standards, the quality of teaching and the curriculum. It is therefore well placed to continue to improve. The school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. Strengths include high quality of care for the children and excellent relationships with parents. As a result children settle quickly into school life. They enjoy a good range of activities, including opportunities to work and play independently. Staff make good use of the limited classroom space and a small outside area. Children's level of development when they start in Reception is typical for children of their age. Children make satisfactory progress and attain the goals set nationally by the end of the Reception year. Lessons are well organised and carefully planned. Adults have high expectations of children's behaviour. In some activities, however, challenge is not always sufficient because learning objectives are too broad and as a result children's progress slows. This is being tackled by the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use information from assessment to identify individuals or groups of pupils who do not make the progress they should and enable provision of support for them more quickly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average. Pupils do particularly well in writing because the school has invested in some high quality training and materials. Pupils continue to achieve well through Key Stage 2 and by Year 6 standards are above average. The school's national test results vary from year to year because cohorts are small and some have a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than usual. A good feature in the most recent Year 6 results was a significant increase in the number of pupils reaching high levels generally and in particular in mathematics. This followed a whole school effort to improve teaching in the subject.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. This is because their needs are identified early and appropriate support is provided.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The pupils love coming to school, they are friendly and polite and behave exceedingly well. They like and respect their teachers and are very considerate towards each other. They feel very safe and secure in school. Parents appreciate these features; typical of many comments was, 'I love the small school feel and the way that all the children know and look out for each other.' Attendance is above average.

Pupils respond particularly well when asked to take responsibility. They are helpful around the school and carry out their duties seriously. The school council, for example, helped to interview the school cook and now works with her to make sure the excellent meals are healthy and popular. Older pupils worked very hard recently to manufacture and market their own produce for a fund raising fair.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They take a full part in the many sporting and extra-curricular activities. They regularly meet and work with expert

visitors; this broadens their experience and develops their self-confidence. They leave this school with very positive attitudes to learning and excellent social skills. They are confident users of information and communication technology (ICT) and have good standards in literacy and numeracy. They are very well prepared to move on to their next school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, and at times outstanding. Pupils speak highly of their teachers, who they say work hard to make lessons interesting and help them learn. Relationships are excellent everywhere. Consequently pupils behave very well, work hard and make good progress. Common strengths in lessons include careful planning and preparation, clear explanations and a good pace so no time is wasted. Teachers check pupils' understanding as lessons progress and remind them of what they set out to learn. This helps pupils to concentrate and reflect on their progress. Pupils say that they like this and it helps them to improve. In most lessons the teachers are quick to provide new challenges, but are patient and encouraging if anyone is struggling. Occasionally, the pace and level of challenge of lessons are not as high and pupils do not make as much progress. Teachers and the effective team of support staff work together well to make sure all pupils succeed. They use technology confidently to introduce new ideas and help pupils' understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school constantly looks for ways to improve learning. In writing, for example, standards have improved significantly since teachers sought expert advice and adopted some new methods and materials. Resources for ICT have been greatly improved and now effectively support learning in many subjects. Teachers plan carefully to make sure the level of work is well matched to pupils' age and ability. Pupils appreciate this; they say that in the mixed age classes teachers are usually quick to provide extra help or a new challenge. A good range of visits, visitors and events enrich the curriculum and stimulate learning. There are useful links with other schools, the church and other local organisations. These provide extra experiences, such as French lessons and residential visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. High levels of teamwork and the effective support and challenge from governors ensure a clear focus on improving pupils' achievement and supporting their personal development. This team approach reflects the school's status as an Investor in People. The school does not rest on its laurels; it has an accurate understanding of its performance in all aspects. It is always looking for strategies to improve and is keen to seek outside advice. New ideas are managed logically and evaluated rigorously. School leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely and staff of all levels of experience are

encouraged to share their expertise. As a result, the whole team has an understanding of current performance and the priorities for improvement. This understanding, though good, is not fully informed by the present system for tracking pupils' progress.

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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	3
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?	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	2
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?	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Chad's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham, DL14 0EP

As you know, I visited your school recently for two days. I am writing to thank you for being so helpful, welcoming and polite. I enjoyed my visit, especially watching you and your teachers in action and meeting so many of your parents at the Christmas Fair. Many of you told me you were proud of your school and pleased about how well you are doing. I think you should be because yours is a good school.

I admired lots of things. First of all the way everyone seems to get on so well and work together. This includes all the adults and all of you. Sometimes it felt like one big family. I also liked the way you enjoy lessons and get involved. You work hard and are determined to improve, so it is no surprise that you make good progress. Lots of you told me that the best thing about the school was the teachers. No wonder you are learning well. I know you enjoy all the clubs, visitors and performances that St Chad's arranges. Many of your parents wrote to me; they especially like the way the school takes good care of you and keeps parents informed. You have an excellent understanding about how to keep safe and healthy and contribute a great deal to your school and village communities.

Your teachers know you very well indeed and they keep careful records of how well you are learning. I have suggested that they make this information even more useful by using it to show your progress right from the Reception class. In this way they can see the 'big picture' of your progress in each year and work out where it could be better.

Yours sincerely

Keith Oglesby

Lead inspector