

# St Matthew's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122313
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	314265
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gordon Potter

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Father Paul Zielinski
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Bernadette Pye
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Highfield Lane Prudhoe Northumberland NE42 6EY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01661 835484
<b>Fax number</b>	01661 835484

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average for its type. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below that found nationally. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational need are well above the national average. Most pupils are of White British background.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Matthew's Roman Catholic (VA) First School offers a good standard of education to its pupils. They are well cared for and make good progress because of effective teaching. It is a school at the heart of the community that cares deeply for its pupils and gives them good care and support. The school is highly regarded and parents appreciate the way their children are helped to feel safe and secure.

Pupils' achievement is good. From starting points in Reception below what is typical for their age, pupils make good progress and standards have been generally above average since 2004. The school's results in the 2007 national assessments for Year 2 pupils were above average in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing were below average. The results of tests conducted by the school in Year 4 in 2007 show that pupils' attainment is better than that normally seen for pupils of their age.

Very good relationships and sensitive support from a caring staff strongly promote pupils' good personal development. Pupils know that there is always someone to turn to if they need help. Attendance is above the national average and reflects pupils' enjoyment of school. The large majority of pupils are well behaved, although a small number find it difficult to sustain concentration. All pupils are keen to participate in the wide range of after-school clubs and activities provided. They readily take on responsibilities, such as participating in the school council. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay fit, as the school puts good emphasis on these qualities. The school's good focus on developing pupils' academic and personal development gives pupils a good preparation for their future economic well-being.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Classrooms are bright and welcoming and lessons are tailored effectively to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Teachers set targets for pupils to improve and make good use of marking to do this. The curriculum meets requirements and is enhanced by a good range of well planned and stimulating activities. There are not always enough opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has developed a strong team ethos and encourages others to develop their leadership roles. There is a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has brought about good improvement since the last inspection, especially in the development of information and communication technology (ICT). It knows that the key to raising standards further is to improve pupils' writing. The school has a good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The effectiveness of provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress. Children are well nurtured and cared for in a safe and stimulating environment. There are strong links with parents and outside agencies, and school staff get to know the children well before they start school. Both the indoor and outdoor curriculum is well planned with a good range of exciting activities that support new learning. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and ensure that adults plan well together as a team. Staff have a clear understanding about how young children learn. Good planning is based on the meticulous assessment of children's skills and abilities. As a result, children develop increasing levels of knowledge and skills and become more confident and independent. Children with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are quickly identified and support provided.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in writing and provide more opportunities for pupils to practise writing in other subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. Standards are generally above average. At the end of the Foundation Stage, children reach the levels of development typical for their ages, reflecting the good progress made in the Foundation Stage.

Since 2004 the trend has been of above average standards at the end of Key Stage 1, reflecting the good progress that the pupils make in Years 1 and 2. The school's results in the 2007 national assessments for Year 2 pupils overall were average, although in reading and mathematics they were above average. Standards in writing were below average. Pupils make further good progress in Years 3 and 4 and the trend of results of tests conducted by the school in Year 4 shows that the pupils' attainment is better than that normally seen for pupils of this age. In reading and mathematics their progress is good but writing remains a weaker aspect of the pupils' performance. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make as good progress as their peers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, and social development, are good. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the cultural diversity within Britain today. They enjoy coming to school, work hard and are friendly and polite. They say that they feel safe and secure and bullying is rare, confirmed by inspection findings. Behaviour is good overall although a small minority of pupils find it difficult to concentrate for sustained periods of time, slowing their progress, particularly in writing.

Pupils know how to stay healthy; they eat healthy lunches and appreciate the opportunities to take exercise. Attendance is good. There are excellent opportunities to contribute to the school family and beyond. Pupils have a good awareness of the local community and the needs of others. They show this care by regularly raising funds to help others. Older pupils look after younger ones, for example, by organising games at play.

The school council gives pupils a voice, although they say they would like it to have more influence. Enterprise activities and the development of group work skills that help prepare pupils for the world of work are good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are effective so that all pupils make good progress. Teachers prepare lessons well to meet the needs of all learners, including the needs of the more able. Clear learning objectives and individual and group targets ensure that pupils know what they have

to do in their work. Marking is good and it shows pupils what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Lessons are interesting. A range of techniques, including problem solving and talking in pairs, holds pupils' attention and gives lessons pace. Teachers use skilful questioning to encourage pupils to think more deeply. Relationships in classrooms are good. Whiteboard technology is used well to help pupils in their learning. Behaviour is good when pupils are actively involved in their learning. In lessons that are satisfactory, teachers do not allow pupils to discuss their ideas together sufficiently and there is too little challenge for the more able pupils. The school is good at meeting the needs of pupils who have difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants offer good support for such pupils and this extends to assisting all pupils in their learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements and takes account of national initiatives and guidance. There is a strong emphasis on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Although a start has been made to provide opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills, the curriculum offers too few opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects. There is a strong emphasis on creative subjects in the school, especially art and music. Pupils' personal and academic development is well supported by good enrichment activities. Pupils benefit from a range of visits, including those to local historical sites, and from working alongside visiting artists and environmental workers. French is taught to all children and pupils in the school. Pupils appreciate and take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities including football, tennis, recorder group and yoga.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. The school's focus on gospel values informs its care for its pupils. All members of staff know the pupils well and are aware of their needs and how to meet them. Support for vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is both sensitive and effective. There are effective relationships with the many outside agencies who work with the school. The health and safety of all children are paramount and all necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are in place. A good personal, social and health education programme is effective in supporting pupils' personal and emotional development and raising their awareness of how to keep fit and healthy. The school supports pupils well when they move into school, between phases of education and for their future education. Close social and academic links with the local primary and middle schools ensure pupils are ready for their new school.

Reports for parents about pupils' progress are clear and informative and set targets for improvement. Assessment is very effective and used by all teachers to plan work and to support pupils' learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, has a clear view of the school. Self-evaluation is therefore accurate and is reflected in a

school improvement plan with appropriate areas for development. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching and learning, including evaluating pupils' work, to ensure that pupils are doing as well as they can. The school uses data effectively to identify pupils with particular needs so that work can be provided to support them. The school sets and achieves challenging targets for pupils across the school, except in writing. Governance is good. Governors contribute well to the development of the school. They get involved in the school's self-evaluation and provide a good level of challenge for school leaders.

A large majority of parents support the work of the school and appreciate what it does for their children. The school has effectively removed the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection, especially with regard to the quality of marking and ICT. It has a 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 <sup>1</sup> 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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

5 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Northumberland, NE42 6EY

Thank you so much for making me welcome when I visited your school. St Matthew's Roman Catholic First School is a good school. The staff care for you very well and help you to learn well.

I was pleased to see that you work hard and do your best. You come to school regularly and on time and most of you behave well in lessons and in the playground. I found that you are very polite and helpful and I enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told me that you enjoyed coming to school and that you liked your teachers. You said you appreciated the activities the school provides for you like the visits to castles and museums and the work you do with visiting artists. Your parents and carers like the school very much, especially the way you are cared for.

The school is going to help you to improve your writing especially by providing more opportunities for you to write in different subjects.

You can help by working especially hard in lessons where you write and by concentrating on all your work.

Thank you for all your help and I wish you every success in all you do in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Potter

Lead inspector