

# St Francis Church of England Aided Junior School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114267
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	319454
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Moira Fitzpatrick

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Bowes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stuart Joyce
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Scholars Path Newton Aycliffe County Durham DL5 7HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 300236
<b>Fax number</b>	01325 318690

---

<b>Age group</b>	7–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 September 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	319454

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school is set in an area of very high deprivation and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also well above average. Pupils join the school from a neighbouring infant school. Since the last inspection, when it was given a notice to improve, the school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy Schools and anti-bullying awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is an outstanding school where standards and pupils' achievement have risen rapidly because of excellent leadership and management. The headteacher's vision and determination to overcome underachievement have been fully supported by staff and governors. All have worked extremely hard and very effectively to reach the headteacher's challenging targets for improvement. Standards are now much higher than a year ago and pupils achieve very well. The first signs of improvement were the results of national tests in 2007, when Year 6 pupils reached average standards for the first time in three years. Even better was the progress that these pupils had made to reach these standards. National data rated pupils' progress amongst the top 5% of all schools. Unvalidated results in this year's tests in English, mathematics and science show a further significant rise in standards, with a very good increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. For the second year running, the school exceeded its most challenging targets.

Pupils' improved progress is the result of excellent teaching and learning. Teachers plan very well for all groups of learners. They know exactly what each pupil needs to learn next and have taught pupils to decide for themselves how they can improve their work. Pupils thoroughly enjoy teachers' challenging questions and the opportunities they have to make links between one subject and another in lessons. Each of these features contributes to the fast pace and happy atmosphere found in all classes. The curriculum is good. It has developed well since the last inspection but does not yet fully meet the interests and aspirations of all pupils.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. They enjoy school because they are successful and feel safe and happy. As one parent commented, 'My child just started this term. I have never seen him so happy at school before.' Pupils know how to lead a healthy life and are keen to raise funds and find other ways of helping those less fortunate. They are proud of their fund-raising and are pleased that the school has listened to their ideas for fund-raising events. They particularly appreciated the 'wacky hair day' last year. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously, for example, as members of the school council or as buddies, and are excellent ambassadors for the school's Christian, caring ethos. The care, guidance and support provided by staff are outstanding and make a very strong contribution to pupils' success and sense of well-being. Staff lead the way by example in their caring attitudes and commitment to supporting pupils and their families. Parents and carers are full of praise for the way staff care for their children. One parent's comment that, 'Teachers are outstanding – always approachable.' sums up the views of many.

The school's exceptional improvement since the last inspection has been built upon the skill, expertise and excellent teamwork of all who work in the school. There has been a determination to overcome obstacles, share and develop the very best practice and leave no stone unturned in the search for the best for pupils. Senior staff have given an excellent lead by their own example and dedication, as well as by their support and encouragement for staff. The school's undoubted success in making and sustaining improvement since the last inspection indicates its excellent capacity for further improvement.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the curriculum so that it increases pupils' enjoyment of learning even further and takes more account of their interests and aspirations.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is excellent. Results in national tests in 2007 showed that Year 6 pupils reached average standards and had made much better than expected progress from their below average starting points at the beginning of Year 3. These results marked a significant improvement over previous years when standards had been well below average. Moreover, they signalled the beginning of an upward trend of achievement and rising standards in the school. Provisional results for 2008 national tests show that the school has again raised standards, with significant improvements in English, mathematics and science at both the expected and higher levels. Once again the school exceeded its very challenging targets. Inspection evidence, based on school tracking data and pupils' work in the last school year, supports the school's view that this upward trend is being sustained, and that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are on course to meet similarly challenging targets in national tests. The rate of pupils' progress continues to accelerate and is extremely rapid in all years.

Pupils achieve very well in all classes, regardless of their background, starting points or learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They usually enter the school with broadly average, and often below average, standards and make better progress than pupils in most other schools. Standards in art and design are particularly high. Displays of pupils' high quality work enrich the corridors and classrooms.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. So too is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and know where to turn for help. Their good attendance indicates how well they enjoy school. They speak very highly of the input from fellow pupils as buddies, mediators and 'leap learning' partners. Each of these groups works hard to ensure that pupils are supported by friends and peers if they have a problem. The school council has actively promoted anti-bullying awareness so that all pupils are well informed about how to respond to any form of bullying. Such involvement gives pupils a real sense of partnership in helping to run and improve their school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy life, know how to stay safe and which adults they would turn to for help if they need it. They thoroughly enjoy school, show excellent attitudes to learning and demonstrate high levels of respect for themselves and others by their excellent behaviour. They have a good understanding of the wider world and are very well prepared to play their part in the future with good basic skills and an excellent understanding of how to be a good citizen.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. High quality lessons are based on very good knowledge of pupils' learning. Teachers make regular and accurate assessments of what pupils know and can do, then use this information to carefully plan the next steps in learning. Pupils' response in lessons could not be better. Because new learning is so well presented, pupils listen attentively, are ready to answer questions immediately and happily volunteer to take a lead at the front of the class to explain their ideas. Pupils' respect for each other is exemplary. They listen patiently while classmates manage complicated explanations, often helping out or developing each other's ideas. The pace of lessons is very brisk and often electric – especially in mathematics lessons where rapid fire questions are relished by pupils who love the idea of keeping up with the teacher. Teachers' ambitions for pupils to achieve their very best are evident in the interesting tasks and exciting resources they provide to motivate pupils. Teachers and learning support assistants work very well together. Their excellent teamwork ensures that all groups of pupils, regardless of ability, enjoy their learning and make the same rapid progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and there are some outstanding aspects. Provision for English and mathematics is excellent; so too is the planning for mixed-age classes. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good and improving as the school prepares to create learning links for pupils and their families through the Durham Learning Gateway. The curriculum is developing well to meet the interests and aspirations of pupils. For example, links with a local secondary school provide good opportunities for pupils who are keen on sport or art. However, the curriculum does not fully meet the interests and ambitions of all pupils yet. There is still work to be done on developing the curriculum so that pupils have the opportunity to pursue individual interests and aspects of subjects independently. Further development is planned by the school in the coming year, for example for outdoor learning. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. It ensures that pupils have a good understanding of personal safety, healthy lifestyles and good citizenship. After-school clubs and visits provide a good range of activities to extend pupils' social skills and knowledge of the world around them.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support for pupils are excellent. The school ensures all health, safety and safeguarding procedures are met. Teachers make strong, supportive links with parents and carers to ensure that pupils are helped to succeed. This excellent partnership is very much appreciated by families who are delighted that their children are so well cared for. Teachers' very effective links with the home give pupils a strong sense of security and well-being. The headteachers' focus on raising standards has resulted in excellent systems for assessing, recording and tracking pupils' progress. Teachers accurately assess pupils' learning and are rigorous in tracking their progress to ensure they are achieving their best. Pupils are now involved in assessing their learning and know what they need to do to improve their work. Support and guidance for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are

outstanding. Meticulous assessment and regular monitoring of pupils' learning means that their changing needs are always met. Parents fully recognise the quality of support they and their children receive. 'I feel that my child would not get the support he needs if it wasn't for the fantastic teachers at St Francis.'

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's ambition and excellent vision for raising standards and achievement rapidly have been fully met through the excellent teamwork of staff and governors. Senior leaders have worked very effectively to improve the school at a tremendous rate. Staff throughout the school have worked extremely hard to ensure that the school's challenging targets have been exceeded. School self-evaluation is rigorous, robust and accurate. The school has a very good view of its strengths and where improvements are needed. Some of its judgements about its effectiveness are a little modest but everyone in the school is aware that it is on a clear upward path. Despite the high quality of its work, the school is keen to improve even further and plans for improvement indicate that it still sees itself with some way to go to meet its goals fully. Governors have given very good support to the school since the last inspection and have played a key role in supporting its rapid development. They are well involved in the monitoring and evaluation process and have a clear view of their own future development.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

**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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

---

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

24 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Church of England Aided Junior School, Durham, DL5 7HB

Thank you for helping me in the recent inspection of your school. Your friendly welcome and good company helped me enjoy myself very much during the two days I spent with you. Please pass on my thanks to your families for returning the questionnaires. They showed me how they think very positively of your school and your teachers.

I judge that your school is outstanding because it helps each one of you to make really good progress and reach the highest standard you can in your learning. Your standards are now above those of most other schools. Well done! That is because you respond so well to the excellent teaching you receive and work very hard and do your best in lessons. Your teachers and learning support assistants work hard too and plan carefully to make your learning exciting and challenging. I agree with those of you who said, 'they are always there for you'. They certainly know you very well, take great care of you so that you feel safe and happy, and give you excellent support with your learning.

I enjoyed hearing about the things you learn about in school and what you like most. I agree with those of you who said that you would like to find out about many more things than you do now. So I have suggested that the headteacher and teachers look at ways of making your curriculum even more interesting and exciting than it already is. Your school has improved very well indeed in the last two years because of the excellent leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders, and the skills and determination of teachers and learning support assistants.

You have excellent personal skills. These show in the way you enjoy school and get the best out of it; they show in the way you care for each other and help each other when it's needed. You are keen to take on responsibility for improving the school and raising funds to help people you haven't even met. All of these important skills prepare you very well for your future.

I wish you all the very best for the future and know that you will go on helping your lovely school to get even better!

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector