

St Columbas Roman Catholic Primary School Aided

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108625
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	324808
Inspection date	10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	235
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Ronan
Headteacher	Mr Robert Meek
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Station Road Wallsend Tyne and Wear NE28 8EN
Telephone number	0191 2007235

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement and standards of learners in their work; the personal development and well-being of the pupils and the quality of the care, guidance and support they receive; the level of challenge provided by teaching and the curriculum; and the effectiveness of leadership and management at different levels through the school. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation; published national assessment data and the school's own assessment records; policies and minutes; observation of the school at work; interviews with members of staff, pupils and governors; and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average and has fallen over the last three years. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few pupils from a minority ethnic background and/or for whom English is not their first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and there are very few pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Healthy School Award, Activemark and the Basic Skills Award. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision.

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. There are some outstanding features. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding as a result of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding because of the school's particularly caring ethos. This is underpinned by its Christian values; for example, every pupil is valued and is expected to treat others with care and consideration. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school life as shown by their high levels of motivation in learning. They adopt safe and sensible attitudes in lessons and around the school. As a consequence, their behaviour is excellent and pupils flourish in the supportive environment. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including child protection and risk assessment, meet requirements. Pupils are highly aware of how to live healthy lifestyles. Pupils' good attendance reflects their commitment and enthusiasm for all the school has to offer. Pupils take great pride in their role on the school council and in the responsibilities they have for decision making. They manage the finances of a number of enterprising initiatives successfully, for example providing a break time snack service and deciding how the profits should be spent. Pupils' mature and responsible attitudes are the result of having the freedom to express their views and opinions from an early age - 'Freedom with responsibility', as the headteacher explains to pupils. Pupils appreciate the many rewards given to celebrate their success. Good basic skills, mature and responsible attitudes and high levels of confidence ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Parents are extremely appreciative of the education and care that the school provides. One parent commented that the school is 'a wonderful place which not only educates the children, but nurtures them. St Columbas has a real family atmosphere and a spirituality you can almost touch. It's how a school should be'. This is a view shared by many other parents and inspectors agree with them.

Most children enter the EYFS with skills and abilities which are broadly typical of children their age. The strong provision in the EYFS means that they make good strides in their learning. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are mostly above average. The outcomes of national tests and assessments together with the school's own tracking data and work seen during the inspection confirm that pupils make good progress overall and that standards are above average and sometimes well above average by the end of Year 6. Provisional results in 2008 showed that two thirds of pupils reached the higher levels in English and just over half in science. Fewer pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics although results in mathematics were above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as their peers because of the well targeted support they receive.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good and in some lessons they are outstanding. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have very good relationships with pupils. This has a very strong impact on pupils' positive attitudes to work. The school checks pupils' progress systematically and provides effective support to meet a variety of needs, for example those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are more able. This ensures that most pupils reach their challenging targets. Marking is effective and gives helpful guidance to enable pupils to improve their work. Good use is made of self-assessment to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own progress. In the best lessons, teachers ask probing questions which help to develop pupils thinking skills and encourage them to explore and solve problems. Pupils are given valuable opportunities for discussions with talk partners which enables them to develop their vocabulary and communication skills. Pupils relish the challenges that are

presented and are motivated to work hard. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not always use questioning effectively enough to challenge pupils. When this occurs, the pace of the lesson slows and pupils do not make enough progress.

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. It is thoughtfully planned to enrich and stimulate pupils' learning in a variety of ways. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are developed well and good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise these skills in other subjects of the curriculum. Personal, social and health education is strong and has recently been enhanced by the introduction of the social and emotional aspects of learning programme (SEAL). Opportunities for enriching the curriculum are outstanding. Residential experiences are greatly valued by older pupils and the curriculum is greatly enhanced through a wide range of visits and visitors to promote learning. The school has excellent links with schools in Rwanda. During the inspection, a visitor from Rwanda visited the school to share information about life in Rwanda, promote skills in learning French and also share experiences in music and sport. All these opportunities, combined with visits to experience different cultures and beliefs, prepare pupils well for life in a diverse society.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is held in high regard by the whole school community, including parents. As one parent states, 'He is a wonderful headteacher, always making parents aware of what is going on and making himself available at any time'. This is demonstrated by the very informative newsletters sent to parents and the fact that the headteacher is present on the school yard, whenever possible, to greet pupils and parents. Good leadership and management are reflected in the pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development. Staff are also highly committed to providing a good quality of education for pupils and they work very effectively as a team. Middle leaders, appointed just over a year ago, are effective and relish opportunities to promote aspects of learning in the areas they hold responsibility for. They are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and are able to identify any areas of weakness and take decisive action to bring about improvement. This is demonstrated by the way in which the school identified weaknesses in calculation work in mathematics and took effective steps to address this. However, the school action plan is not as sharply focused on improving outcomes for pupils as it should be. The school makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion through excellent links with the local community, particularly the local parish and through extensive links both nationally and globally. Governors are highly supportive and are knowledgeable about the work of the school through regular visits and informative reports from the headteacher. They fulfil their statutory duties well and provide appropriate challenge to the school. The capacity to improve further is good and the school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter the school with skills and abilities which are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in the EYFS because of the good quality of teaching and interesting curriculum provided for them. By the time they leave Reception, children meet and sometimes exceed the early learning goals expected for their age although current Year 1 pupils achieved above and in some areas well above national expectations. The induction arrangements are very effective and enable children to quickly settle into Nursery. The welfare of the children is promoted extremely well and children respond effectively to the safe, stimulating environment provided for them. Their behaviour and attitudes are excellent. They communicate and cooperate well with each other and also demonstrate their ability to concentrate for appropriate periods

of time. Consequently, their personal development is outstanding. Staff work highly effectively as a team and plan very well together to ensure a broad curriculum and wide variety of activities for children both indoors and outdoors which meet their individual needs well. Children are able to work independently, but also respond very well to adult directed activities. However, on some occasions opportunities are missed to promote speaking and listening skills still further. The provision in the EYFS is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2, particularly for more able pupils.
- Ensure that school improvement plans are sharply focused on outcomes for pupils.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

11 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Columbas Roman Catholic Primary School Aided, North Tyneside, NE28 8EN

Thank you for making me and Mr Petts so welcome in your school when we came to visit. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and around school. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires and tell them that we took all their views into account. St Columbas is a good school. There are some areas which are outstanding. Your achievement is good and the standards you reach are above average and sometimes well above average. This is because teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Here are some of the things we really liked about your school.

- You are extremely friendly, polite and well behaved and are a credit to your school and to your parents.
- Your teachers provide many exciting and interesting activities for you to help you learn, such as visits to the theatre and residential experiences.
- You are learning a great deal about your own community as well as about people in other countries, for example through your links with a school in Rwanda.
- You are developing excellent enterprise skills through running the 'toast club' and managing finance.
- The headteacher and staff look after you extremely well and give you very good support to help you improve your work.

There are some things which we feel would help to improve your school. We have asked the school to raise standards in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2. We have also asked the leaders and managers to make sure that school improvement planning identifies more clearly how the school can help you to improve even further.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by making sure you come to school every day. Thank you for helping with the inspection and the best of luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster

Her Majesty's Inspector