

St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Moor

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114247
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325973
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Sleightholme

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	86
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	13
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin Meredith
Headteacher	Miss Joanne Sands
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hustledown South Moor Stanley County Durham DH9 6PH
Telephone number	01207 232189

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2008
Inspection number	325973

Fax number

01207 280367

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	4-5 December 2008
Inspection number	325973

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: 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

This is a small primary school. Most pupils are White British. None are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision includes Reception children taught in a class with Year 1 pupils.

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's a shame this is my daughter's last year at St Mary's', is a written comment that sums up most parents' positive views of the school. The headteacher, appointed just three months ago, has worked with staff and governors to set clear priorities for the school's development. A monitoring programme has been established and staff, having assumed new responsibilities, are supported well professionally.

Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. In their time at school pupils become polite, courteous and mature young citizens. They make friends easily and their behaviour is excellent. They feel safe in the welcoming, caring ethos of this family school. Pupils value exercise and through their good efforts the school has been awarded the Activemark. Pupils love school, especially those lessons that provide them with opportunity to do practical tasks. Pupils are gradually having a bigger say in how their school can improve. They have a successful track record of fund raising to support local and national charities. Their attendance is satisfactory.

Achievement is good. Children make good progress in the EYFS. This is now sustained from Year 1 to Year 6. Standards are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. Staffing difficulties that affected pupils' progress in Years 2, 3 and 4 have been resolved. Teaching is now good and most pupils are now making good progress. Occasionally, activities are not as demanding as they could be for more able pupils who could achieve more.

Progress has improved as a result of the good curriculum. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the new initiatives to improve writing. Whole school strategies to improve the quality of writing have helped to accelerated progress in this key skill. When lighting and sound were used to promote independent sustained writing one Year 6 pupil remarked, 'I am excited, it's really cool.' The good teaching stems from confident subject knowledge, good pupil management, mixed teaching methods and promoting effective links between subjects. Pupils benefit from the good partnerships that give them access to sports coaches and a linguist. The care given to all pupils is good. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from sensitive support and make good progress. Academic guidance to pupils is focused well on improvement with pupils encouraged to work towards clear targets.

Leadership and management, including governance are good. A comprehensive audit of provision has led to a thorough understanding of school strengths and weaknesses. Leaders are ambitious for the school to succeed. As yet, new co-ordinators have had limited time to develop their roles although a good start is under way in terms of collaborative monitoring. The knowledgeable governors support the school well. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. Children start in the Reception year from starting points that are well below what is typical for their age. Many have poorly developed speech and language skills and limited understanding of numbers. Teaching is good and children make speedy gains in these areas of learning and also in their social skills. Progress in knowledge and early writing skills is slower. Despite their overall good progress children's attainment is below average when they transfer into Year 1.

Children feel safe because daily routines and systems for their care are good. Some confidently show others how to move briskly to the music during daily exercises that all children enjoy. Children behave well and enthusiastically help when 'tidy time' is called. The well organised and resourced classroom areas provide good coverage of the EYFS curriculum. Children responded positively when a puppet 'Red Beak' helped them to count from 1 to 10. Learning develops well indoors because there is a good balance of adult led and child-selected tasks. Although staff make use of other outdoor spaces there is no outdoor learning facility specifically for the EYFS and this limits children's opportunities for interest and enquiry. Leadership is good and has already identified outdoor provision as a key priority and formal proposals are being prepared. EYFS practices have developed well through good teamwork and clear direction. The development of individual records based on rigorous assessments and incorporating photographic evidence is a strength in the good partnership with parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide outdoor learning facilities for children in the EYFS.
- Ensure teaching provides more challenge for more able pupils.
- Extend the monitoring and evaluating skills of recently appointed subject leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils enter Year 1 with below average standards and make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. The 2008 assessments for Year 2 pupils were average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Progress in Key Stage 2 has fluctuated because of staffing difficulties. Results of the 2007 national tests for Year 6 pupils were average in English, mathematics and science. Few pupils reached the higher levels and this pulled down the overall results. The 2008 provisional results for pupils in Year 6 are expected to be similar but with gains at the higher level and in science. The significant changes in staffing, good teaching and resolute determination of school leaders to set challenging targets is leading to an improvement in standards. Pupils are now consistently achieving well and current standards are above average. However, the more able pupils are often insufficiently challenged and could achieve more. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because they benefit from additional support sensitively matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are reflective. Displays illustrate topics where they have thought deeply about environmental themes, such as recycling and energy efficiency. Pupils feel safe. They know how to stay safe personally and how to access help quickly from adults or buddies at playtime. They access the Internet safely. Pupils willingly take part in vigorous daily exercises. One said, 'It's good for you because it gets you ready for lessons.' Pupils are thrilled to tell visitors about their school and the activities they enjoy. They are proud of a tall structure they built from paper when a visiting engineer worked with them on a design project. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. During the inspection severe weather resulted in indoor breaks. Pupils played happily together and used classroom games resources sensibly.

Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities such as managing the daily fruit tuck shop. They have a good record of raising funds for worthy causes and the choir performs regularly in church. Pupils' voice in the school is just developing. Recently appointed school councillors have already suggested a playground friendship stop would be a useful addition. The pupils' good attitude coupled with good academic achievement prepares them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers establish good relationships with their pupils and a positive ethos permeates in lessons. Routines are well established and time is used efficiently. Skills are taught well because teaching is clear, methods are engaging and opportunities are taken well to link learning in one subject with that in others. The drive to improve writing is being addressed confidently with initiatives to promote better vocabulary and punctuation being applied consistently across year groups. Planning is mostly good. A strength of planning is the preparation of activities that allow pupils to learn through first hand experiences. Poetry writing on a winter theme in Year 2 improved noticeably when the teacher took the pupils briefly out into falling snow and skilfully posed questions to encourage better vocabulary. In a science lesson lower Key Stage 2 pupils combined their scientific and mathematical skills to make and test how gravity and air resistance affect paper spinners. Occasionally, teachers do not sufficiently intervene and challenge more able pupils to make quicker progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum helps pupils to achieve well. Priority is given to the acquisition of skills in literacy and numeracy. Learning is enhanced through regular school visits such as to Segedunum, a Roman fort museum, during a history topic and a local cinema during national Film Week. Provision for writing has strengthened. Topics such as 'myths and legends' typify positive action to engage boys more successfully in this skill.

Personal, social, health and citizenship education has a high profile. Pupils express their thoughts about feelings, relationships and future occupations. A narrowness to the curriculum is that global issues are under-represented. The introduction of 'place of the month', currently Uganda, and French specialist teaching to junior pupils are two examples of how leaders are strengthening the curriculum internationally. Many pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities including recorders and choir, netball and dance. Good partnerships especially through sports links enhance pupils' knowledge and skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents rate highly the good care and support provided to their children. One wrote 'the school has always provided a safe and caring environment'. Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet requirements. There are no recorded incidents of bullying, exclusions or racism.

Teaching assistants provide good support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities during group work and intervention programmes. A weakness is that during class discussions

their support for individual pupils is at times limited. Good links with agencies ensure pupils have access to specialist expertise.

Academic guidance is good. There is a good system for tracking pupils' progress. Pupils know their personal literacy, numeracy and science targets because they are recorded clearly in their target folders. Progress towards individual targets is updated in these files every two weeks and they are taken home daily so parents are kept well informed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The recently appointed headteacher, through her enthusiastic and purposeful leadership, is helping all those involved in the school to pull together to 'aim high, achieve excellence and enjoy success'. Early outcomes of new leadership are an accurate audit of provision, a revision of staff responsibilities and a clear development plan that gives priority to raising standards and promoting personal development. The significant changes combined with the resolute determination of school leaders to set challenging targets is leading to an improvement in standards and good capacity to improve.

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.

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?	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 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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	2

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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

8 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Moor, Durham,
DH9 6PH

Thank you for making my visit to your school so enjoyable. I enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classrooms, looking at your books and displays and talking to you about your school. You were friendly and polite and I was impressed by your outstanding behaviour. These are the things I found out about your school during my visit.

You attend a good school. All the people who work in school are doing a good job and it is a happy, friendly place to be. Most aspects, such as your personal development, are good. You told me you feel safe and know how to access help quickly. You know why it is important to stay healthy. Your attendance is satisfactory. You told me you find school activities very enjoyable. Your school councillors have made a good start in representing your views. The staff provide you with good care. They organise good support for those of you who need extra help quickly. You receive good guidance on how to improve your work and clear targets to work towards. Your school leaders have devised a good learning programme for you to follow that makes learning interesting. Good teaching ensures learning is fun. Consequently you make good progress throughout the school. Those of you capable of doing harder work should do more difficult activities. You can play your part by working hard in lessons. Most of you have reached average standards by Year 2 and above average standards by Year 6. I was impressed by the improvements you are making in writing. Well done!

I have left some suggestions about things the school could do better. These are that

- Reception children are provided with their own special outdoor area.
- Those of you capable of harder work are all challenged sufficiently.
- The new team of school leaders use all their skills to check everything in school is working well.

I wish you and all the staff the very best for the future.

Derek Sleightholme

Lead inspector