

St Andrew's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122304
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327692
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Carol Gater

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	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	220
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 Graham Wilkins
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Johnstone
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Albion Way Blyth Northumberland NE24 5BL
Telephone number	01670 352606

Age group	3–9
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2009
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Fax number

01670 545692

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is an average sized first school. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds with a small proportion from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils who use English as an additional language is below the national average but is increasing. A small proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils having free school meals is below the national average. The school provides education for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the security and safety of pupils.

The school's effectiveness is inadequate because the school does not comply fully with current regulations for keeping pupils safe; arrangements to guarantee their safety on site are inadequate. Inspectors discussed the issues with the headteacher and governors and it was clear that actions are now being taken to rectify these matters, in particular regarding the security of the playground. Some parents also expressed their concerns about the safety of the environment.

Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 1 to attain standards that are broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 2. The results of national assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2008 showed some improvement in mathematics with more pupils reaching the higher levels than in the previous year. Currently, standards are average although there are further signs of improving progress in writing. This is a result of a whole-school initiative to quicken progress in this subject. Standards when the pupils leave school at the end of Year 4 are in line with national expectations; pupils make satisfactory progress during their two years in Key Stage 2.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but there is too much inconsistency to ensure the best progress in all years. Assessment is not always accurate, so that while in some lessons learning is well pitched this is not always the case. Overall, teaching caters satisfactorily for pupils of different abilities. Support for different groups is sometimes well planned and teaching assistants provide the support needed to help all groups, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to make satisfactory progress. Much is done in lessons to raise pupils' self-esteem with positive comments. Guidance through marking is inconsistent in helping pupils to improve in most subjects. The curriculum is satisfactory. It provides a suitable concentration on developing key skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Actions taken by the school to improve the curriculum have helped to increase pupils' enjoyment and have had a positive impact on raising standards, for example in writing. The school has established some international links to broaden pupils' understanding of their own and wider communities. Out of school activities enhance the curriculum.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils take on responsibilities and are proactive in helping others; for example, the computer committee is proud of helping younger children. Although older pupils act as buddies in the playground at break and lunchtimes, some pupils voice their worries about the behaviour of a minority of pupils. However, behaviour in lessons is good and pupils follow organised routines and rules. Most enjoy school and work hard in lessons. The school's focus on raising standards in the basic skills ensures that pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of education.

Although leadership and management are inadequate, the headteacher and governors have established a new leadership team which is enthusiastic and committed to improving the school. The team has a firm focus on raising standards and actions taken have had a positive effect; the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

Provision for learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and improving. However, welfare requirements are not met due to security issues concerning the perimeter fencing. This means that overall the provision is inadequate as are leadership and management. The new members of the Early Years Foundation Stage team work well together and have begun a programme of curriculum development which is extending provision so that it develops basic skills through all areas of learning. The leader has a clear vision of what the unit can become. New systems have been introduced this year for tracking children's progress. However, the accuracy of teachers' assessments of the children and the quality of learning opportunities are variable from class to class and there is insufficient monitoring to ensure that this improves. Children join the Nursery with skills that are typical for their age and make satisfactory progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nearly all reach the goals expected for them by the end of the Reception and a few exceed them. Children's personal development is well promoted through warm supportive relationships and clear routines that help them feel positive about coming to school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take immediate action to comply with current safeguarding regulations and ensure pupils' safety and security on the school site.
- Improve the consistency of teaching by ensuring that teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is accurate, and that the information from assessment is used to plan precisely the next steps in learning for all groups of pupils.
- Improve the quality of marking and educational guidance so that pupils are given clear advice on how to improve their work.
- Implement more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with national averages. In 2008, test results showed an improvement in mathematics with a higher number of pupils attaining the higher Level 3. Currently, Year 2 pupils are on track to meet national expectations. Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who use English as an additional language, make the progress expected of them. This is because they are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants.

In Year 3 and Year 4 most pupils continue to make the expected progress and by the end of Year 4 standards are in line with national expectations. While the school's assessments of Year 4 pupils in 2008 showed that pupils achieved well, the work of pupils currently in Year 4 shows satisfactory overall progress. However, the new writing initiative is having a positive impact on progress in literacy; pupils are using a wider variety of vocabulary as well as improving the structure of sentences in their writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is satisfactory. While pupils generally feel safe in school, some feel anxious that the behaviour in the playground is too boisterous. Pupils understand about healthy lifestyles and enjoy taking plenty of vigorous exercise at playtimes and in after school clubs. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and try hard in lessons. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils willingly take on responsibility and contribute to the improvement of the school. For example, some act as buddies in the playground, the school council is proactive in gathering ideas to improve facilities such as games in the playground, while the computer committee runs lunchtime clubs to help pupils improve their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils learn about life in other countries through their links with schools in Turkey and Poland and are beginning to develop a greater awareness of life and traditions in other lands. They also do much to raise funds for local and international charities and demonstrate considerable care for those in need. By the end of Year 4, pupils are adequately equipped for the next stage of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, there is too much inconsistency between classes to ensure good progress for all pupils. Assessment is used to plan activities to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, but not consistently so. Teaching is less effective when activities are not well planned to provide precise starting points for all groups of pupils. When lesson objectives are clear, the tasks challenge thinking and promote independent learning. ICT is used well and even the younger pupils display good skills in this subject. This was evident in a lesson where pupils were using traditional tales to make animations. Questioning is typically used skilfully to assess pupils' understanding. However, occasionally too much reliance is placed on pupils volunteering, rather than the teacher choosing who will answer questions. Marking is inconsistent and not always used to give pupils key points for improvement. While there is some improvement in the marking of writing, with pupils having opportunities to assess their own work, this needs to be more consistent with time allocated so that pupils can act on the advice to improve.

Consistent rules, routines and rewards successfully promote good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for pupils. The 'creative learning journey programme' results in meaningful links between subjects that enhance learning and motivate pupils. Good provision for ICT has helped pupils to record their work more imaginatively. There are some good features that enrich the curriculum and promote pupils' understanding of community cohesion; these include local visits and links with overseas schools. These help pupils learn about other cultures and countries. The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to develop interests and talents. Italian is taught and the school has held international days. At a dance club, run by students from the middle school, pupils are choreographing a routine

that will be performed in a local theatre. Planning for basic skills is adequate, and provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. An example of guided reading and writing showed good challenge for higher ability pupils, although this is not consistent across all year groups.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support are inadequate because the school does not provide a safe and secure environment for pupils. Serious concerns were brought to the attention of the headteacher and governors during inspection and the school has taken action to begin to remedy the situation as a matter of urgency. Consequently, the overall procedures for protecting the safety of pupils do not meet current requirements, although child protection arrangements are adequate. Systems to monitor attendance are satisfactory. In lessons, adults give pupils effective encouragement to behave well and try harder with their work. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and use of positive praise raises self-esteem. The school tracks pupils' progress and identifies support for vulnerable groups. Teaching assistants have been well-trained for their roles and, overall, provide good support for these groups of pupils. Assessment is not always used effectively to set the right level of challenge in all lessons. Although the quality of marking has been reviewed since the last inspection, it is still inconsistent in giving advice on how to improve work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management of the school are inadequate. The governing body and headteacher are not fulfilling their obligation to provide high quality care and ensure the pupils' safety. Governors are supportive and actively seek to develop their knowledge of the school through monitoring visits and training. However, their failure to ensure that all welfare requirements are met means that governance overall is inadequate. The headteacher and leadership team are focused on raising standards and achievement, and have rightly identified reading and writing as priorities. Assessment information is analysed by subject leaders to inform school and class targets. These are challenging and the headteacher regularly monitors pupils' progress towards them. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to ensure that assessments are used consistently to plan the next steps in learning for all groups of pupils. Initiatives, such as a new writing scheme, have been implemented and their impact is being tracked. The professional development given to all staff, including teaching assistants, on writing has resulted in increased subject knowledge, improved provision and better progress in writing.

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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?	4
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	4
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	4
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

31 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Northumberland, NE24 5BL

Thank you so much for making us welcome when we visited you. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out what you thought about your school. There were things we liked during the inspection, but at the moment your school has been told that it must improve because there are some things which are not as safe as they should be, especially in your play areas. This means that an inspector will visit to check on the progress being made.

Your behaviour in lessons is good and we were impressed with your ICT skills. The Computer Committee does a good job in supporting the younger children. It is obvious that you like 'Brave Writing'. Keep up the good work and remember to write like this in other subjects. You know about healthy eating and enjoy PE. This will keep you fit. You also care for others by raising money to help people who are not as fortunate as yourselves.

We have asked the school to make sure that everything is done to make sure that you are safe and secure at all times. You could help by giving your ideas about the play areas to the school council at their next meeting. We have also asked the school to improve the marking of your work; this will give you good tips to improve all your work. We have also asked teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes to share the best ways of assessing and recording what children learn so they have a clearer idea of how to help children improve.

Thank you again for making our visit enjoyable and good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Carol Gater

(Lead inspector)

Moira Fitzpatrick