

# St Aidan's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122307
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	327694
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Shearsmith

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.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	191
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Father Ian Jackson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Samantha Leslie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Norham Road Ashington Northumberland NE63 0LF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01670 813308

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–9
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	327694

**Fax number**

01670 851200

<b>Age group</b>	3-9
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14-15 October 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	327694

---

© 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 two Additional inspectors

## Description of the school

St Aidans First School is a smaller than average size Catholic school. The percentage of pupils who receive free school meals is just below the national average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British Heritage. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and the Sports Activemark Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Aidan's is a good school. The school provides its pupils with good care and support and ensures that they are happy, behave well and show enthusiasm for their lessons. Parents strongly appreciate the way teachers help their children to feel safe and secure in school and make lessons interesting. Pupils' progress is tracked well and as a result pupils generally make good progress across the school. Pupils do not, however, have sufficient guidance on how to improve their mathematics.

Good relationships and sensitive support from a caring staff promote good levels of personal development. Pupils know that there is always someone to turn to if they need help and as a result feel safe and secure. Attendance is average after a significant improvement last year, due to a successful range of strategies to promote attendance. Pupils' behaviour is good and contributes to their enjoyment of school. Pupils readily take on responsibilities, such as being school council members or buddies. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay fit, as the school strongly promotes these aspects.

Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education and are given a number of opportunities to develop their economic well-being. Teaching and learning are good with pupils being engaged in range of interesting activities which are beginning to help them improve their basic skills. Teachers make learning exciting and make good use of support staff to ensure all pupils play a full part in lessons. A developing strength of learning is the way pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively and this is improving pupils' progress. Children enter school with skills which are below the national expectations for their age, particularly in the key areas of communication, language and literacy and calculation in mathematics. In summer 2008, the oldest pupils left with broadly average standards which exceeded the levels predicted from when they were in Year 2, continuing the good progress shown in the previous year. The curriculum is good and effective action has been taken to improve the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), which now makes a significant contribution to promoting pupils' progress. Pupils also have access to a wide range of musical and sporting activities both within and out of school that adds to their enjoyment.

Leadership and management are good due to the strong partnership between the headteacher and the deputy. Subject leaders also have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and measure the outcomes of their actions on pupils' progress. The governing body and the senior leaders in the school have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as they are involved in monitoring and evaluating aspects of school life. The success of actions taken since the last inspection, such as improving the provision for ICT, shows that the school has a good capacity to improve and gives good value for money as pupils' progress in this area has significantly improved.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is satisfactory and children make satisfactory progress. It provides children with good care and support and ensures that they are happy, behave well and show enthusiasm for their lessons. Parents strongly appreciate the way teachers make lessons interesting and have good systems to ensure children are safe and secure in school. Children enter the Nursery with skills which are below those typical for their age, especially in

communication, language and literacy and mathematics calculations. They settle very quickly and enjoy school developing good relationships with adults and other children. Children follow classroom routines well, and thoroughly enjoy taking a full part in activities. Staff organise a good range of indoor activities for children to select from. These successfully foster children's development in almost all areas of learning. Children make good progress in their personal and social development and knowledge and understanding of the world. However, children's access to outdoor learning is limited and, as a result, children only make satisfactory overall progress. By the end of the EYFS, attainment remains below the level expected for their age in communication, language and literacy and to a lesser extent in mathematical development. Although assessment procedures are in place they are not sufficiently moderated to ensure their accuracy. The leadership of EYFS is satisfactory as monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped.

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

- Ensure pupils know their next steps in learning particularly in mathematics.
- Improve provision for outdoor learning in the EYFS.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are broadly average and achievement is good as pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points. From below average starting points in the Nursery they make satisfactory progress in the EYFS, though they still remain below the expectations for their age in communication, language and literacy and in aspects of mathematical development. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have made good overall progress and in 2007, the school's results in the national assessments were broadly average in reading, and writing although slightly below average in mathematics. Pupils continue to make good progress in the early stages of Key Stage 2, although mathematics remains a relatively weaker area. The provisional results of the 2008 assessments for Year 2 and the optional tests for Year 4 indicate that pupils' standards are broadly average and that achievement continues to be good across the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally as good progress as the other pupils.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as they learn to understand their feelings and have tolerance and respect for the views of others, whatever their beliefs or backgrounds. Pupils enjoy coming to school, behave well at all times and particularly enjoy music activities. Attendance is satisfactory as the school has worked hard to improve it. Pupils' good attitudes to learning, together with the good development of basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, prepare pupils well for their future learning. Pupils have a good understanding of how they can contribute to their own and others' safety at school and how they can manage risk in their lives beyond school. Pupils understand the need for regular exercise as they readily take part in various physical and sporting activities and enjoy the daily 'Activate' sessions. Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided for them to be involved in decision making processes. They make a good contribution to the wider community, for example through their work with the Wansbeck Enterprise Education Network and fundraising events supporting a variety of charities.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because lessons include a range of interesting learning activities to meet the needs of individual pupils. Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners and to work collaboratively with others and as a result learning is enhanced. In good lessons teachers use learning objectives and focus on how children can be successful, which ensure pupils make good progress. Relationships in class are good and as a result teachers successfully encourage pupils to work enthusiastically and behave well. Marking is increasingly effectively used to tell pupils how to improve their work. However, this is inconsistent across the school, particularly in mathematics where children do not always know their next steps in learning. Classroom assistants work effectively alongside teachers and support pupils well in their learning, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The inclusion mentor is particularly successful in ensuring pupils are actively engaged in learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with a strong focus on creativity which engages and motivates pupils. Pupils are encouraged to see the links between learning in different subjects and this is beginning to have a good impact on their learning. Strong provision for personal development ensures pupils achieve well. The many activities and visits enjoyed by the pupils motivate them to learn and develop their understanding of their own and other cultures. Pupils have a good understanding of their local area and are given a range of opportunities to understand the multicultural nature of the wider community for instance through focus work on Ghana. Recent initiatives have improved the provision for ICT, and this is beginning to have a positive impact on the whole curriculum. There is a good range of extra-curricular, musical and sporting activities which many pupils participate in and enjoy.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are well cared for and good relationships with outside agencies ensure that the needs of all pupils are well met. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for vulnerable and looked-after children is good. Pupils feel safe and all required safeguarding measures are in place. A good programme of personal, social and health education supports pupils well and contributes to their good personal development. Transition between phases of education and within the school prepares children well for the next phase of their education and there are well established links with the middle school. The school has set itself challenging targets and academic progress is carefully tracked to ensure pupils make good progress. Pupils, however, do not have sufficient information to know how to improve in mathematics and as a result progress is not as consistently good as it could be.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy form an effective partnership that is instrumental in moving the school forward. Staff have a clear picture of their roles and responsibilities and with effective team work have introduced a wide range of initiatives. The senior leadership team monitor and evaluate the impact of their work well and the school continues to make significant improvements. Governors support the school well and are increasingly active in monitoring and evaluating their actions to improve the school. Effective steps have been taken since the last inspection and recent initiatives are carefully monitored to measure their impact. The school's accurate self-evaluation and recent successful actions show that it has a good capacity to improve and gives good value for money. Resources are well targeted to improve the school particularly in ICT where provision is now good and children make good progress.



**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?	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?	3
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?	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?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<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>	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	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

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

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

**Annex B**

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

16 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Aidan's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Northumberland, NE63 OLF

On behalf of the team, thank you so much for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told us that you enjoyed school and that you liked your teachers.

St Aidan's is a good school with all the staff caring for you very well. Teachers help you to learn by making your lessons fun and exciting. It was also good to see that you are learning about how people in other communities live. We were pleased to see that you work hard and do your best. We think that your behaviour is good and found that you are very polite and helpful.

We talked to your headteacher and staff about what could be done to make your school even better; this is what we came up with.

- Make sure that you always understand how to improve your mathematics.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils in the early years to learn in the outdoor area.

You can also help by always doing your best.

David Shearsmith

Lead inspector