

# St Mark's RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108498
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newcastle Upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	337093
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graeme Clarke

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	186
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pat Barnett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Alison Miller
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Bardon Close Westerhope Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE5 4BT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Around half of the time was spent looking at pupils' learning. The inspectors made extended visits to 13 lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine teachers or specialist support staff, a school assembly and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies and documentation, pupils' work, assessment data, monitoring records and strategic planning. They also looked at 61 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as 17 questionnaires from staff and 102 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the way the school improved pupils' progress over the past three years and the progress of pupils currently on the roll
- the school's arrangements to help all pupils develop and make the progress of which they are capable
- the progress children in the Early Years Foundation Stage made over the past three years
- the way the school improves pupils' behaviour, their adoption of healthy lifestyles and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. About a third of pupils come from Catholic families. Almost all pupils have a White British heritage and a well below average number of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average although none has a statement of special educational needs. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in the Reception class. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status, the Activemark, the Drugs Quality mark, Inclusion Quality status and the Enviro-schools International Green Flag.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school, where, as a result of good teaching and some outstanding aspects of its work, pupils' progress and achievement have improved and are now good. The substantially improved curriculum widens pupils' experiences and develops good personal qualities. Pupils' involvement in activities to promote healthy lifestyles and spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are outstanding. The exceptional quality of care, guidance and support, with well-chosen activities to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, makes a most effective contribution to the progress they make. In no small measure these improvements stem from the outstanding drive and ambition of the headteacher and leadership team to improve learning and draw upon exceptionally fruitful partnerships with parents and others.

When children enter the Reception class their skills and knowledge are below those expected for their age. Determined and successful initiatives to improve teaching have led to a year-on-year rise in standards. Good teaching, evident throughout, ensures pupils make good progress as they move through the school, especially in English and less so in mathematics. Year 6 gained above average results in all subjects in 2009, which is a clear improvement on previous years. In doing so, the school exceeded its targets for pupils' progress. Very effective use of support staff and outside agencies enables pupils with particular learning needs or those who are gifted and talented to make good progress. Some make excellent progress. Middle attaining pupils make satisfactory progress because teachers are yet to make complete use of information they gather when assessing pupils' work to tailor their teaching to the individual needs of this group of pupils. Overall, pupils achieve well.

Good arrangements to safeguard the welfare of pupils lead them to feel safe. The school very successfully promotes an atmosphere of calm and harmony, which truly reflects its mission to foster Christian values and caring relationships. Good behaviour now prevails throughout. Pupils willingly contribute in many ways to their community. The school's excellent partnership arrangements and pupils' above average basic skills and enthusiasm for learning are all factors which prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

The headteacher and governors have a very clear and perceptive view of the school's strengths and areas for development, expressed very well in the school's self-evaluation. They focus sharply on improving teaching and widening pupils' experience and, in turn, pupils' attainment and personal development. Substantial improvements made since the last inspection are now firmly established. The school has good, well-managed facilities although resources for information and communication technology (ICT) in the Reception class are not altogether appropriate. The governing body carries out its

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functions diligently and has an accurate knowledge of the school gained from reports and first-hand monitoring. Governors are keen to extend their role in review and evaluation of the school's work. Taking all this into account, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress of middle attaining children overall and by pupils generally in mathematics by:
  - ensuring teachers use their assessments of pupils' progress consistently to accelerate pupils' progress by accurately matching activities and support to each pupil's ability
  - developing teachers' knowledge of how to promote better learning in mathematics so they can give pupils precise pointers to improve when marking their work and providing support.
- Improve the use of information and communication technology in the Reception class by:
  - making facilities available in a more flexible way
  - using software that is appropriate to children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Effective teaching helps pupils enjoy learning and achieve well. Pupils take part with wholehearted enthusiasm in lessons where they are motivated to work hard and are eager to do well. They are keen to respond to questions and offer good and often full answers such as when they have to explain their reply. They become engrossed in their work and participate fully and responsibly in class, small group and individual activities. Older pupils particularly write legibly and take care to present their work neatly and clearly.

Pupils make good progress to build on their below average attainment when they join the school. Standards have risen year-on-year in both Key Stage 1 and 2 during the period since 2007. In 2009 standards in Year 2 were average in reading, writing and mathematics. After a period of reaching average standards at the end of Year 6, in 2009 pupils gained above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Boys did particularly well compared to boys nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress and did better than their counterparts nationally. Higher attaining pupils, including those identified as gifted and talented, made good progress and attained the highest levels. In comparison, middle attaining pupils made satisfactory progress. Pupils made significantly better progress in English than in mathematics. Taking all pupils' backgrounds and starting points into account they made good progress overall by the end of Year 6. This picture of attainment and progress continues for pupils presently in school.

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Pupils feel very safe in school and know exactly what to do in the event of a concern. As a result of very well managed approaches to deal with any misbehaviour, pupils' conduct in classrooms, corridors, the hall and playground is good. Pupils are very well informed about the importance of a healthy diet and how to seek help with any emotional difficulties. They put their all into physical and sporting activities. Through exceptionally effective links with local organisations, the church and residents in the area, pupils make a good contribution to both the local and school community. They readily take on a range of roles such as playground buddies and as school council members. They willingly help others less fortunate than themselves, for example through supporting local and worldwide charities.

All staff work very successfully to promote community cohesion, which leads to excellent social development. Pupils play their part in making the school a harmonious place to be and have a strong understanding of different faiths and the multicultural nature of their city. They have a good grasp too of the diversity of life worldwide. Attendance is average and improving. Their very well developed social skills, experience of enterprising activities, strong basic skills, including competent use of ICT, all equip pupils well for their future economic well-being. Collectively, pupils benefit from the exceedingly rich range of opportunities the school provides exceptionally well so that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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**The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

**1**

## How effective is the provision?

Exceptionally well-led initiatives, which focused on developing key aspects of teaching, have improved its quality. Teaching is good throughout and leads to pupils' good learning and progress. Teachers use information about pupils' attainment well to plan and arrange activities. Teachers and assistants work very well together to offer effective support. Such teaching sustains pupils' involvement and enjoyment. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are gifted and talented, benefit from activities that are closely matched to their learning needs and expert assistance, which helps them make good progress. Although teachers have clear expectations of pupils' learning, and match work to groups of pupils well, arrangements to do the same for individual pupils' whilst developing well are not yet firmly established. Diligent use of strategies to improve reading and writing are paying dividends both in Key Stage 1 and 2. Teachers' marking is helpful, particularly in English. They set pupils clear objectives, let them know when they are met and give pupils useful pointers to bring about improvement. Although the same approach is used in mathematics, teachers' pointers to improve often lack sufficient precision to make pupils' learning fully effective.

The curriculum very successfully makes pertinent links between subjects to include literacy, numeracy and ICT. Together with participation in an initiative to improve writing, this themed approach enables pupils to practise skills in different subjects and has successfully improved writing standards. Many awards reflect the richness of opportunities the curriculum affords pupils. Participation too in the Creative Partnerships initiative substantially extends pupils' experience and widens horizons, for example in the way pupils have gained deep insight through in-depth project work combining the history, heritage and life of the city of Newcastle. A carefully planned and thoroughly well-structured approach to personal, social and emotional aspects of learning also plays a key part in fostering outstanding aspects of pupils' attitudes to health and their spiritual moral, social and cultural development. Effective adaptations to the curriculum meet the needs of different groups such as for pupils with special educational needs, extending their grasp of English or mathematics.

Parents are fully involved in the school's outstanding arrangements, which support its vulnerable pupils so well. Well-trained teaching assistants and learning mentors make a key contribution to helping pupils reach their targets, behave well and develop confidence. Of particular note is the very effective way multi-agency partnerships provide specialist help precisely where it is needed. The school very successfully ensures that it offers a safe and caring environment where pupils are happy, confident and at ease with one another. Excellent arrangements effectively foster children's transition from home and are exemplary in the way they prepare pupils for moving on to secondary education. Close cooperation between the parent support worker and the education welfare service encourages regular attendance and is reducing persistent

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absenteeism.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the senior leadership team drive improvement with dedication and commitment. Their commendable team spirit and ambition to help pupils attain and achieve highly is a vital strength. All staff share a common vision and approach to promote the school's aims, which embrace the education and care of pupils and ensure equality of opportunity. Senior leaders have rigorous monitoring roles which are central to their accurate and well informed evaluation of their successful work to improve the school. Governors are also well-informed. They undertake training and use their expertise well to support, challenge and hold the school to account. They benefit from the headteacher's very analytical reports and gain for themselves a first-hand perspective of the impact of initiatives to improve learning. Their self-review has led them to recognise the value of increasing their early involvement in evaluation and strategic planning for improvement. Through many avenues the school fosters a very strong partnership with parents and carers, with the outcome that almost all support its work. By promoting this and other partnerships with the local authority, agencies and community organisations, together with fostering links with the church and heritage centres, the school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Pupils help strengthen the school's own identity and sense of community. Partnerships successfully help pupils find out about many aspects of their local heritage and give them insight and awareness of different cultures globally.

The school is sincere in promoting equality of opportunity and carefully ensures all groups of pupils participate fully without discrimination. Although successfully fostering good progress by lower and higher attaining pupils, teaching has yet to benefit middle attaining pupils fully. Governors and the school ensure that up-to-date training, procedures for child protection, recruitment, risk assessment and attention to health and safety combine to assure all aspects of safeguarding pupils' welfare. Diligent financial monitoring and prudent management lead to very effective use of resources. Given pupils' good progress and achievement, combined with good and outstanding aspects of personal development, the school gives good value for money.



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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Reception class. Early assessments of their skills on entry show they begin with below average starting points, particularly in their use of language and communication. Children make good progress and reach broadly average standards especially in their reading and communication skills and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Their personal development also shows good progress in the way, for example that they settle into routines, are able to work both independently and cooperatively and show delight in being involved. Good caring and working relationships prevail at all times. Staff use their expertise well to ensure a good balance of well-arranged activities that make good use of indoor and outdoor facilities. However, their ability to use ICT to aid teaching and learning is restricted by facilities and software which limits both flexibility and appropriate opportunities. Rigorous assessments enable staff to foster children's learning in a well organised way, which blends learning that children initiate for themselves with adult supported activities. One group, playing at being little scientists, were very successfully helped to extend their language, counting and physical skills when investigating dinosaurs outside. Work that helps children develop knowledge of letters and sounds is particularly successful. Vigilant staff pay close regard to the care and welfare of children and ensure all procedures closely follow guidelines for safeguarding children. Parents particularly appreciate opportunities afforded to them in the morning to speak with staff and contribute to settling their children. They are informed well of their children's progress on a day to day basis and in detail every fortnight. In this well led Reception class,

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children make good progress in all aspects of their learning as a result of thoroughly good management. Rigorous assessment, diligent planning and effective communication ensure a strong, productive partnership with parents.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires were overwhelmingly supportive. All those replying were particularly pleased with the way the school is managed so that their children are safe, develop a healthy lifestyle and enjoy their overall experience of school. The very few written comments were about individual concerns or were very positive.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mark's RC Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 186 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	55	29	43	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	64	24	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	54	28	42	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	49	27	40	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	39	58	26	39	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	54	27	40	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	61	25	37	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	49	32	48	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	52	27	40	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	45	31	46	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	45	30	45	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	54	29	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	63	24	36	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's RC Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE5 4BT

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our visit to inspect your school. Thank you for helping us when we came to see you at work in your lessons and assembly. You were very polite and we did enjoy talking with those of you whom we met. We know the headteacher and all the staff are very proud of you. We were delighted to see how much you like to take part enthusiastically in activities during and after school. You are well behaved and polite to others in lessons. We were pleased to see how you contribute to school life and help others.

Yours is a good school. All the adults in the school look after you really well and keep you safe. You make good progress in the Reception class and throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. You do well because your school gives you an outstanding range of activities with special projects, visits and visitors. We like the work you are doing about the history and traditions of Newcastle. Results in tests you all have to take in Year 6 improved a lot since 2007 and, last year, they were above average in English, mathematics and science. Those of you needing extra help do very well. Some of you are making satisfactory progress and we have asked the school to help you all make good progress. When we looked at your books we liked the way your teachers let you know what they expect you to learn, how well you are doing and how you can do better. Sometimes, though, their comments are not sharp enough to help you, especially in mathematics. I have asked your teachers to be very precise when they point out what you need to do to improve. Many of you have excellent facilities to help you. I found the computer equipment in the Reception class not quite so useful so we have asked the school to see if they can improve it.

You have many opportunities at St Mark's Roman Catholic Primary School to learn about life and these help you to prepare for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector

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