

# St Catherine's RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108507
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newcastle Upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	337094
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 June –1 July 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Scott

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	244
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr C Carr
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Ewing
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Greystoke Gardens Newcastle-upon-Tyne Tyne and Wear NE2 1PS
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 13 lessons, taught by eight teachers. They observed other activities, such as play times, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They analysed the school's documentation, data on pupils' progress, welfare arrangements and the 69 questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers, as well as those from pupils in Key Stage 2 and from staff.

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

- the extent to which the school is closing the gaps in attainment between girls and boys
- teachers' expectations of pupils and match of work to their abilities
- pupils' awareness of other cultures and communities in the United Kingdom and the wider world
- the impact of curriculum planning on key skills, especially in writing and science
- the quality of self-evaluation at all levels of management.

## Information about the school

This is a slightly larger than average urban school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been falling steadily and is now quite low at about 10%. The school has a diverse pupil population with a high proportion of pupils from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, most of whom speak English as an additional language. A few are at an early stage of acquiring English. The school holds several awards, including the Basic Skills Award, the Investing in Children Award and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

**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?**

**3**

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

**3**

### Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It has a caring and supportive ethos that parents and carers appreciate and which encourages pupils to become thoughtful, respectful and socially very adept. The school is very inclusive and has established a strong sense of community among its diverse pupil population. Pupils feel safe and valued, their behaviour is good and their adoption of a healthy lifestyle is excellent. They benefit from a good curriculum that meets most of their individual needs and gives them a broad perspective on life. The school does not, however, make the best use of its many and varied activities to improve literacy and numeracy.

Children benefit from a good start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes. Here, learning is lively, well focused and boosted by stimulating activities that constantly challenge them. Staff are quick to spark ideas among children and re-direct learning skilfully when needed. Consequently, children make good progress. Pupils' overall achievement in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. Standards are broadly average by Year 6 and have been similar in the past few years. There has been some improvement in mathematics and also in writing in Key Stage 2, following a recent whole-school emphasis. Girls attain better than boys, although the gap between them is steadily closing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

Teaching is satisfactory, sometimes good. Classrooms are positive environments and pupils have good attitudes to work. Teachers present new learning well and strive to match work to pupils' abilities, based on careful assessment. However, they do not always expect enough from pupils. Not enough lessons provide the scope for pupils to learn at their own speed and in their own way. Teachers give good advice to pupils in lessons but their marking of books is not rigorous enough to hasten learning and encourage good presentation.

The headteacher and senior staff have established effective partnerships with parents and carers, other schools and external agencies to strengthen pupils' learning and experiences. Through regular monitoring, the school recognises how it needs to improve and some of its initiatives are successful. However, its self-evaluation is not as rigorous as it should be and development plans lack detail and a sense of urgency. Even so, the strengths of the care for pupils and the range of the curriculum, together with the high regard for pupils' personal development, show that the school has satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

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

- Improve standards attained by all pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that:

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- teachers routinely expect more of pupils in all lessons
- lesson planning is more flexible and creative so that all groups of pupils can work more at their own pace and with greater independence
- the marking of pupils' work helps pupils to understand fully how well they are doing and how they can improve, including their presentation
- the rich elements of the overall curriculum feature more in the everyday learning of English and mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation at all levels of management by:
  - ensuring greater rigour in analysing all aspects of provision, especially teaching
  - creating development plans that are sharply focused, based on detailed analyses and tightly linked to very specific success criteria.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Pupils enjoy school, behave well and are eager to learn. In lessons pupils are attentive, interested and maintain good concentration. Their excellent social skills enable them to cooperate with others easily. They are keen to complete tasks but work steadily rather than rapidly in lessons. However, they do not develop enough independence in their learning, such as devising their own approaches to science investigations.

Standards by Year 6 are broadly average and have been so since the last inspection. The recent improvements in mathematics and writing are obvious but not emphatic. Pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages, including those who speak English as an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because the individual support is very pertinent to their needs. Girls tend to have higher attainment than boys when they start school; the gap persists by Year 6, but it is beginning to close.

Pupils throw themselves wholeheartedly into physical activity. There is a high take-up of the many sports available Pupils' excellent approach to keeping themselves healthy is also shown in their keenness for nutritious lunches. Their sense of community is well developed especially within school and the locality, for example in church services and fundraising. Their awareness of communities and cultures further afield is less well developed, although the many different cultural backgrounds of pupils encourage a natural understanding and tolerance. Attendance is average, but varies and was above average last year. Issues such as volcanic ash and swine flu have had a negative impact this year. Pupils develop good self-esteem, because they are valued. Their social skills and good citizenship prepare them well for the future.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Although teaching is sometimes good, teachers do not expect enough from pupils for it to be good overall. They prepare lessons carefully, establish a positive atmosphere in lessons and, together with teaching assistants, provide advice and support for pupils readily and sensitively. Often resources, such as interactive whiteboards, are used skilfully to reinforce new concepts. Teachers, though, are not creative enough in their planning. They do not give pupils sufficient freedom to learn for themselves, to explore their potential and so make swift progress. Marking in books provides encouragement but does not consistently highlight expected standards or how work can be improved and is not demanding enough about the neatness of work and quality of handwriting. The curriculum benefits from a wide range of exciting activities, such as listening to an Irish storyteller and an enterprise project with Newcastle Falcons. Such activities give very good provision for pupils' social and health education, and boost their community awareness. There is abundant music tuition and good opportunities, using external expertise, for pupils to hone their skills in sports. The school has yet to bring much of this enrichment into lessons in order to strengthen the learning of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and science. The individual support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well planned and successful. The school ensures that pupils who speak English as an additional language rapidly acquire the language and so access the curriculum fully.

<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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An understated but strong Christian ethos flavours the quality of care. All staff automatically look out for pupils' social and emotional needs. The school is especially successful with the pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Close links with local agencies and families help the school to address personal issues and give pupils essential confidence to embrace school life. The promotion of behaviour and attendance is good, because there is a consistent approach by all staff. The formal procedures that underpin the safety of pupils are well organised and thorough.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The thoughtful and compassionate leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in sustaining the positive ethos of the school, promoting a broad and diverse curriculum and championing a genuine inclusiveness among pupils. He has increasingly empowered senior staff to assume greater responsibility for their own areas of responsibility, with mixed success. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The leaders of the main subjects are having some success in terms of raising standards, but only gradually.

The school is aware of its strengths and its comparative weaknesses. However, its action plans for improvement are not rooted enough in detailed analyses nor do they spell out in fine detail courses of action that are likely to address the weaknesses fully. Monitoring by all levels of management, including governors, is regular, but a lack of rigour has prevented the quality of teaching, in particular, from improving apace. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Their overseeing of the procedures for safeguarding pupils, such as vetting staff, is thorough.

Partnerships with parents and carers are fruitful. Increased communication supports learning at home and some parents' and carers' skills are used in the classroom. Links with the church, neighbouring schools and city agencies successfully enhance pupils' values, tolerance, individual skills and self-esteem. The promotion of community cohesion is good because it is well structured and varied. Pupils acquire a strong understanding of citizenship by being closely involved with decision making in the school and through participation in local events.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</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>3</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes. They enter school with skills and abilities that are typical for their age and, by the end of the Reception Year, they reach and often exceed expectations for their age in all areas of learning. Recent improvements to provision have ensured that children benefit from stimulating and challenging learning opportunities inside and outdoors and so the pace of their learning has increased. There are times of very focused adult-led activities, and sometimes these are rather too formal and limit learning, especially in Reception. However, there is plenty of scope for children to investigate, experiment and learn at their own pace as well as develop good social and speaking skills. In the sand tray, for example, a group of boys in Nursery talked earnestly about the 'knights in shining armour' that adorned their castles in the sand, before they turned their energies to demolition and the creation of a prehistoric battleground. Staff ask thought-provoking questions, such as 'Can you imagine you're a spider?' Such activities clearly enable children to enjoy learning, sustain concentration and work hard. They interact and behave well with other children and adults. They feel secure because staff take good care of them and welfare arrangements are secure. The leadership team is enlightened about current practice and is sensitive to the different needs of children. The school has done well to maintain and indeed improve the provision.



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*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**

Responses to the questionnaires were fundamentally positive. It is clear that parents and carers hold the school in high regard. They particularly appreciate the warm and caring ethos, the many and varied activities, the positive influence of the headteacher and the fact that their children are happy. A few parents and carers expressed concerns that not enough is expected of their children in lessons. The inspectors agree with all these views.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Catherine'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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 244 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	75	17	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	72	18	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	46	32	46	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	49	28	41	4	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	38	55	28	41	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	46	34	49	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	57	29	42	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)	40	58	27	39	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	48	32	46	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	48	32	46	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	41	35	51	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	65	23	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	64	25	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.**



02 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's RC Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 1PS

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. Your opinions matter to us; your comments in conversation and your responses to the questionnaires helped to paint a clear picture of your school.

We judge that your school gives you a satisfactory education. Your standards by the end of Year 6 are average in all subjects which means that your progress through school is satisfactory. It is good that you have begun to improve your mathematics and writing. Those of you in Nursery and Reception, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress.

Teachers work hard for you, plan lessons carefully and give you plenty of good advice in lessons. We have asked them, though, to give you more opportunities to work at your own pace and become more independent in your work and to make sure that the work always challenges you. We would like teachers' marking to give you a better idea of how well you are doing and also how you can improve your work, including the neatness of your presentation.

Many things are good about your school. The school takes good care of you, so that you rightly feel safe. All the different activities improve a range of skills and help you to be more knowledgeable, confident and aware of the world around you. We were particularly impressed by the way you have adopted healthy lifestyles, and by the way you get on with and talk to one another and adults.

Your headteacher, helped by staff and governors, has ensured that the school is a happy and welcoming place, and that it continues to do well in many ways. We have asked them to double-check that all the things they do are the right things that will most benefit you, especially in improving the standards of your work. We feel sure that you will support the staff with your own ideas and that you will do your best to work as hard as possible in lessons. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Andrew Scott

Lead Inspector

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