

St Aloysius RC Voluntary Aided Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108720
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	337130
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eddie Watson
Headteacher	Miss Trish Christie
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with senior leaders, governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents. They observed the school's work and analysed 59 questionnaire responses from parents. The team also looked at the pupils' progress data, the school improvement plan, school policies and procedures, scrutinised pupils' work, and spoke to the School Improvement Partner to discuss his reports.

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

- the effectiveness of the governing body in meeting its statutory requirements and holding the school to account for all that it does
- the current achievement and attainment of all groups including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and lower ability girls
- the effectiveness of community cohesion
- the effectiveness of strategies adopted by leadership and management to raise achievement and standards.

Information about the school

This is an average-size Catholic infant school situated between the centre of Hebburn and the River Tyne. Most children come from the surrounding area. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background with one pupil with English as an additional language. A below average proportion of pupils are entitled to a free school meal. Average but increasing numbers of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the Activemark and Investors in People awards. The school is currently subject to hard federation proposals with the Hebburn St Aloysius Junior School, overseen by one governing body. These come into effect on the 1st November 2009. The current acting headteacher has been in post since April 2007.

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 which provides a warm, calm, caring climate for learning. Pupils' commitment to school life, including their attendance, is exemplary. The good leadership of the headteacher ensures that there is a strong focus on learning, care and consideration and respect. Pupils benefit from a positive atmosphere reinforced by Christian values. An overwhelming proportion of parents appreciate the happy, friendly mood in school in which all are included. A typical comment – 'so happy in their safe, happy, caring environment' – sums up their views.

Most pupils make good progress to attain above average standards because of the good teaching and learning. In Nursery and Reception, children make satisfactory progress which then speeds up in Year 1 and 2 where learning activities are more challenging. Strategies to improve the attainment of more able pupils have paid off. However, a small group of less able pupils, mostly girls, though improving their reading and mathematical skills are not achieving well enough in the development of their writing. Learning activities do not capture and hold their interest and support and intervention are uneven in quality. When teaching skilfully matches pupils' interests they remain absorbed, especially when support staff systematically check learning, prompt questions and ensure learning objectives are met. In good teaching, questioning is tailored to ability, builds on earlier learning and extends vocabulary. Teachers check progress regularly to spot any slips, intervene and ensure children are aware of what comes next. From the moment they enter school, pupils are taught to be considerate and respect each other's feelings. Relationships are relaxed and really friendly which leads to a calm and tension free atmosphere. Older pupils display exemplary attitudes. They cope with responsibility exceptionally well, for example mediating in playground disagreements. Good opportunities are provided for the pupils to find out about their local community and the diversity that exists in the world but their experience of diversity in the wider community is limited. The school council displays a strong commitment 'to looking after the school' and were animated when they described their achievements. Persistent absence is very low as a result of the hard work of staff and their excellent relationships with parents.

The headteacher, capably supported by staff, has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas that require improvement. Since the last inspection the school has successfully raised the achievement of more able pupils. This reflects the school's firm focus on improving teaching and learning and reinforces the good capacity for sustained improvement. Systems to check pupils' progress have been improved and strategies to evaluate the quality of outcomes for pupils strengthened. Planning is now better informed. While governors provide good support and much expertise, they are aware

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that their quality assurance management requires greater rigour. Good links with partner schools and a wide range of agencies have a positive impact on the development and well-being of pupils. Together, this enables the school to offer good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help to accelerate the rate of progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing more child-initiated learning opportunities
 - developing a free flow to outside learning in Reception
 - ensuring a relentless focus on speaking, listening, reading and writing
 - using assessment evidence continuously to plan next steps in learning.
- Improve the quality of writing for less able pupils by:
 - providing more imaginative and motivating opportunities for writing, particularly for girls
 - ensuring that classroom support and intervention are tailored to individual needs and are more challenging.
- Improve the range of curriculum opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of national cultures and beliefs.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils arrive in school eager to learn and make good progress overall to reach above average standards. Nevertheless, the rate of progress is faster in Years 1 and 2 than in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Despite the consistent pattern of good standards over the last five years, a small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mostly girls, do not make the same expected progress in their writing. This is because writing tasks are not always well matched to pupils' needs and interests and classroom support is inconsistent in its effectiveness. The pupil for whom English is an additional language makes good progress because of effective intervention and support. In the 2008 national tests, overall standards were above average. Although writing and mathematics were both above average, reading was broadly average. Higher ability pupils achieved well but a small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mostly girls, did less well in reading and writing. The school's analysis of the 2009 tests confirms that overall standards remain above average but with a marked improvement in reading attainment. However, a small number of less able pupils did less well in writing, again mostly girls. Evidence from lesson observation and work scrutiny confirms that writing is a relative weakness, especially for a small group of less able pupils. Determined efforts to boost the quality of teaching and learning have resulted in an improved pattern of achievement across all groups. In those lessons where tasks inspire interest and support is more effective, the teamwork of the teacher and support staff is seamless, making certain learning objectives are met for all groups

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of pupils.

Pupils are extremely sensible, responsible and show each other much consideration. Their great enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent attendance. Pupils have a very good understanding of the benefits of keeping fit, staying active and choosing a balanced diet. A strong sense of belonging is evident, strengthened by much mutual respect. Spiritual, moral and social development is excellent and is apparent in their reflection and thought for others. When prompted, pupils often give emotional responses which reflect their true feelings. Cultural development, while having clear strengths, is no better than good because experiences of the wide diversity of cultures and beliefs which can be encountered nationally are limited. Pupils feel extremely safe and are very confident that staff are always on hand to share a worry. They know how to stay safe, such as when using their bicycle on the road or safely exploiting the benefits of the internet. They raise money for good causes, for example collecting for the Akhonya Trust, often becoming animated when describing how Kenyan children wear the school shirts sent as gifts. Pupils' strong values boosted by their grasp of their own faith are reflected in their good behaviour.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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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How effective is the provision?

A highly committed and hard working team of staff create a lively atmosphere in which pupils can flourish. Although teaching is good overall, it is good and often better in Years 1 and 2. The good teaching is characterised by tasks personalised to the individual needs and talents of pupils. Literacy skills are developed with variety and challenge. Classroom support and intervention are skilfully targeted to pupils new to learning English. When the pace of learning slows insufficient account is taken of pupils' needs and interests. Opportunities are missed to draw out literacy skills. The quality of support for less able pupils is sometimes less well targeted and effective. Progress checking is less systematic. In good teaching, good oral and written feedback is given, detailing what has been achieved and what to do next. Older pupils are familiar with their learning objectives and targets and can explain how to meet them, for example by using more 'tricky words'.

The good and developing curriculum has clear strengths in the provision for personal development and information and communication technology. Both literacy and numeracy are given priority but cross-curricular links do not consistently exploit all opportunities to develop writing. Creative skills and interests are fostered in a variety of ways, for example listening to the music of Franciscan monks. Pupils appreciate the good range of experiences outside the classroom such as visiting a farm and participating in sporting activities. Despite really good use being made of the staff link with children in a Kenyan village, their experiences of the diverse culture in the wider community is restricted.

The excellent relationships between staff and parents are reflected in the detailed knowledge of the individual circumstances of each pupil. This enables staff to provide very good quality day-to-day care. Preparation for the transfer to junior school is effective and eases the transfer of pupils at the end of Year 2.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides good leadership of the school and has unmistakable aspirations for continued improvement. Governors are clearly committed to improving the quality of learning and this is revealed in their drive towards federation. They are aware, however, that key procedures such as safeguarding require regular and robust

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quality assurance checks. Safeguarding meets requirements and the school adopts recommended good practice on most areas of work. The headteacher has deployed patient and professional approaches to successfully tackle inconsistencies in performance, especially in the quality of teaching. Despite the age of the building and the shortcomings in the Reception outdoor provision, the school provides a range of good quality learning environments in which pupils thrive. Management of the school's progress checking system has been strengthened and has led to a more accurate and reliable analysis. This is providing a secure platform for improving intervention and support. The school promotes equality well, illustrated by its harmonious and tension free character. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils contribute well to the local community and show a good understanding of global diversity but have restricted experience of the diverse culture across Britain.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children arrive in the Nursery and settle quickly to become self-assured in a warm, caring atmosphere. Skills are below that expected for their age with communication and language a weakness. Their independence and their personal skills develop well, providing a sound basis for future learning. When they enter Year 1, all have made at least satisfactory progress. Behaviour is good once children come to grips with staff expectations and settle into routines, for example listening to each other and taking turns using the computer. There is a sound focus on speaking and listening but there is not a seamless progression from

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hearing to seeing, saying, reading and then writing. Opportunities to extend vocabulary by describing experiences are missed. Adults ensure that activities and practices are safe and make certain all children are involved. Adult-led activities encourage children to think for themselves, adding to their understanding. There are not enough opportunities for children to think up their own learning activities and so encourage the inquisitive side of their nature through investigation. Nursery children benefit from easy access to a stimulating outdoor area but Reception children have no direct outdoor access. Good hygiene habits are encouraged before snacks, lunch and after outdoor play. The provision is competently led and together staff have worked hard to implement the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements. Staff display a sound knowledge of each individual child's needs and interests. However, strategies to check progress and gather assessment evidence to help plan new learning and systematically build on skills are underdeveloped.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

In responses to the questionnaire the overwhelming majority of parents are extremely positive about the school. Parents hold the headteacher in high regard and appreciate the care and consideration given to their children. Parents express confidence that any concerns are listened to carefully and acted upon appropriately. The school received much praise for the enjoyment it provides for their children. One comment sums up the views of many, 'the school provides love and care always'. Parents might find it helpful to know that there were no particular issues in the very small numbers of concerns received. Maintaining confidentiality, the inspector discussed these with the headteacher so she could monitor them and keep parents informed. The inspectors found that these issues were being addressed.

The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires. In total there are 155 parents and carers registered at the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Aloysius RC Voluntary Aided Infant 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 inspector received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 155 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	0	0	0	0	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)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	0	0	0	0	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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Aloysius RC Voluntary Aided Infant School, Hebburn, NE31 1RZ

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and considerate when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our time at St Aloysius particularly hearing how much you like school. I would like to tell you about some of the good things about your school.

- The school staff look after you and care for you well and help most of you to make good progress in your learning, especially your reading and mathematics.
- Your thoughtful and selfless attitudes and enjoyment of school life are impressive and this is reflected in your excellent attendance.
- You know how to stay safe, keep fit and active and remain healthy.
- The school enjoys excellent relationships with your parents and there are good partnerships with other schools and support agencies.
- You have a good headteacher and a hardworking team of staff.

Your school provides a good education. By the time you leave school, the standards you reach are above the average expected for your age, although a small number of you, mostly girls, do not accomplish as much as you could in writing. To help your school get even better and make sure you achieve higher writing standards we have asked for some improvements to be made. These will make sure that:

- your rate of progress in Nursery and Reception be speeded up particularly improving your reading and writing. I have also asked that arrangements be made for Reception children to be able to learn outside
- all of you improve the quality of your writing but especially those girls who find learning how to write difficult. To help do this we have asked staff to work more closely together so that your planned activities are more interesting and challenging
- you are given more opportunities to think about the different lives and beliefs of other people in Britain.

You can play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection. We hope the school will keep on building on its strengths.

Best of luck to you all

Yours sincerely

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