

St Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114260
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338326
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Kate Pringle

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Butler
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Reeves
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out three additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons were observed and seven teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, assessment information, policies and procedures, school development plans and updates of pupils' progress. The views of stakeholders in the school were also considered through questionnaires from 69 parents and carers, 11 staff and 103 pupils.

- how effectively all teachers use assessment to plan for pupils of differing abilities in order to raise standards
- how well the curriculum engages pupils and enables them to use their basic skills across all subjects
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels identify areas for improvement and implement actions to bring about improving outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average. The majority of pupils are White British and few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is higher than the national average.

The school holds a number of awards, including an Environment Award, Healthy Schools status, Activemark Gold, Britain in Bloom School's Award, Bronze Village Award and the Foundation Stage International Schools award.

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

Central to this warm and welcoming school, that provides its pupils with a satisfactory education, are the extremely caring relationships that support all pupils. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers support all aspects of school life and many comments refer to the 'happy healthy and positive' environment, where staff are considered to be 'deeply committed to nurturing the children'. Pupils feel highly valued and this is reflected in the excellent contributions they make to the school, and to the local community, for example when they consider how to change their environment for the better. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy through opportunities to access high levels of physical and lifestyle-related activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils sensitively consider the feelings of others and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour throughout the school.

From entry to Reception, where most children's skills are line with those expected for their age, pupils leave Year 6 with broadly average attainment. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress overall, but have too few opportunities to work independently at tasks which challenge them appropriately. This limits their progress. In Key Stages 1 and 2 although some good teaching was observed, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress. Its quality is no better because not all teachers share targets with pupils sufficiently or link these targets closely enough to daily learning tasks to accelerate pupils' progress. Similarly, marking does not always focus well enough upon how successful pupils are in meeting their targets nor does it sufficiently inform pupils about how they can improve.

Good care, guidance and support together with the well-developed links with parents and carers, and other partners, support pupils' academic and personal development effectively. The needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are satisfactorily met, enabling them to make satisfactory progress. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and the school provides sound value for money.

The headteacher's vision for the school is shared by the enthusiastic staff, who are deeply committed to their school. Broadly accurate self-evaluation together with the subsequent resulting actions have enhanced personal outcomes for pupils and improved their attendance. Other strategies, for example to use assessment more effectively to improve pupils' progress, and to increase responsibility for leaders, are demonstrating early signs of success. Overall, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing sufficient opportunities for them to work independently at tasks which challenge their abilities and interests.
- Improve pupils' progress by:
 - - raising expectations of what pupils can do and providing them with greater challenge
 - - using individual pupils' targets better to promote learning
 - - finely tuning tasks to meet the needs of individual pupils
 - - using marking more effectively so that pupils know when they have met their targets and can identify the next steps in their learning.
- 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 are well motivated and have good attitudes to learning because of the highly successful relationships they have with their teachers. Pupils particularly enjoy the increasing opportunities they have to work together. When they engage in practical and investigative activities, they apply their communication and basic skills effectively across other areas of learning. They have a developing understanding of their individual targets but do not focus on these sufficiently in day-to-day learning.

Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress overall. Attainment is broadly average in Key Stages 1 and 2, with current evidence of some higher attainment in Year 2 in writing and mathematics. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language, are appropriately met and, overall, they make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' growing confidence reflects the school's successful emphasis to promote their personal development. They value and respect others and this is reflected in friendships across age groups. Pupils feel very safe in school and confidently deal with concerns that they may have. They enjoy working closely and productively with the local community and have a growing understanding of those from other cultures and backgrounds. The majority of pupils enjoy school and their attendance is average. This, together with their sound basic skills, means that they are adequately prepared for their next steps in their learning. Pupils' well-developed sense of responsibility and their growing independence enables them to demonstrate a sense of real citizenship by the time they leave Year 6.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The positive ethos of the school promotes pupils' engagement in all aspects of school life. Pupils are willing to learn, and set about their tasks with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Teachers' knowledge, skills and use of technology, including that of interactive whiteboards, engages pupils effectively in new learning. Termly assessments record pupils' attainment and identify the progress they make over time. However, the use of this information to meet the differing needs of individual pupils is not yet used consistently to ensure that pupils are aware of their individual targets. Tasks are not yet sufficiently challenging for all pupils and marking is not consistently helpful. This is why pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good.

The rapidly developing curriculum provides a breadth of activities which is opening new horizons and prospects for pupils, through, for example, their horticultural experiences and their residential visits to France. A particular strength of the provision is the promotion of pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged effectively to use their literacy skills to support learning in other subjects. Recent improvements to extend links between subjects provide pupils with a more relevant and interesting curriculum resulting in greater enthusiasm for learning. There is a particular strength in art, where attainment is high. A considerable range of additional activities before and after school involve many pupils and enhance and extend their learning and personal development. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the visits they make which give them first-hand, new and exciting experiences.

The good care, guidance and support of pupils by staff who have detailed knowledge of their problems contributes much to the support given to both them and their families.

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The specific needs of pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are identified quickly and addressed through individual learning programmes and interventions. Effective communication with parents and carers, and with other partners and agencies, ensures good support and, subsequently, helps pupils to overcome barriers to learning. Strategies to improve attendance have been effective and persistent absence is decreasing, enabling more pupils to learn regularly. Close working relationships with parents, carers, nurseries and other schools help to ensure that pupils settle quickly and transfer with confidence between different stages in their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 vision of the headteacher, which is shared by the newly appointed senior leadership team, has been put into practice successfully to help pupils to become well-rounded and confident members of society. This is recognised by parents and carers who acknowledge the good support provided for their children to assure their safety and well-being. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and action plans identify appropriately where further improvement is necessary, particularly in the quest to raise standards. The increasing devolvement of responsibility to other leaders is supported by appropriate professional development. There is a very strong sense of teamwork. All leaders participate in evaluating the quality of their own areas of responsibility and contribute to developing provision and raising standards. Effective tracking of pupils' achievements means that there is now a shared responsibility for the progress pupils make across the school. This information provides the starting point to identify underachievement and to provide greater challenge for individual pupils. A strongly inclusive ethos ensures that every pupil is supported to have access to all learning experiences. Despite the clear determination of leaders and managers to improve the school, and the evident success of some of the strategies put in place to do so, there remains more to be done to raise attainment and to ensure pupils make good progress consistently.

Governors actively support the school's work and this enables them to understand appropriately the school's strengths and where improvement is needed. The governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. Governors are particularly vigilant with regard to the safeguarding of pupils. Links within the local community are strong and there are good opportunities to enable pupils to experience and understand

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the values and traditions of different cultures, both nationally and globally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Reception class with skills which are expected for their age. Children settle quickly and develop good relationships with each other and with their teachers, which helps them become more confident. Working happily together, children increasingly share and take turns, demonstrating positive attitudes and good behaviour. By the time they enter Year 1 their attainment is broadly average. Where particular areas of learning have been targeted for action, for example in emotional development, in communication skills and in linking sounds and letters, there is some good progress and higher attainment evident.

Children enjoy coming to school and this view is supported by parents and carers, who appreciate the care and attention given to their offspring. Good support by outside agencies and partners contribute to children's overall development. Adult-led activities often provide opportunities for children to make good progress. However, children's progress is no better than satisfactory overall, because there are too few opportunities for them to work and play independently within activities which provide suitable challenge to extend their learning. This is because the useful information about children's day-to-day development, which is recorded in their learning journals, is not used effectively enough to plan tasks which closely meet children's needs. The well-resourced indoor provision is freely accessible. However, there are fewer opportunities for children to work and play outdoors, which limits their choice of where and how to learn. Satisfactory leadership ensures that statutory requirements are met;

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policies and procedures support the children's welfare appropriately. Self-evaluation identifies areas of need and subsequent actions ensure satisfactory improvements to provision.

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

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are extremely positive about the school and hold the headteacher and her staff in very high regard. They greatly appreciate the care and consideration given to their children and are confident that any concerns are listened to and acted upon appropriately. The few concerns raised were fully investigated with no serious issues found.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided 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 198 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	70	18	25	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	76	17	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	48	33	46	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	54	29	41	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	68	22	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	56	26	37	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	65	23	32	2	3	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)	45	63	20	28	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	54	30	42	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	54	28	39	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	39	34	48	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	41	58	26	37	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	68	22	31	1	1	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). 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">■ 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.



23 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Spennymoor, DL16 6SL

We would like to thank you for the lovely welcome you gave inspectors when we visited your school recently. We were extremely impressed with how well you work and play together. Your behaviour is exceptional and this means that you feel very safe in school and show great care and respect for each other. Through your curriculum, and many additional activities, you know what to do to lead a healthy lifestyle. You can show and tell others, for example, how meals can be improved. You really enjoy school and have good relationships with your teachers. You listen well and work hard, especially in lessons where you are able to 'do' things. We were very impressed with the quality of your ICT work, your sporting achievements and the displays of art around the school, which really showcase your ability to be creative. We know that you really appreciate the many visits to other interesting places and the work that you do with different people who visit school.

Your school clearly has many strengths but there are some things we would like to see improved. We have asked your headteacher and teachers to help you by:

- making sure that tasks for children in Reception are well planned to meet their individual abilities and to give them lots of opportunities to choose how and where to learn about things they are interested in
- helping you to understand and to use your individual targets better and making sure that your tasks meet your individual needs. We have also asked that your teachers' marking tells you what you have done well and what you need to do to make your work even better.

We know that you will help your teachers and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Kate Pringle

Lead Inspector

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