

# St Andrew's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122304
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	340121
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Graham HMI

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>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	183
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Graham Wilkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pauline Johnstone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Albion Way Blyth Northumberland NE24 5BL
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons taught by eight teachers. They spent more than half of the inspection looking at pupils' learning and progress. The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's planning documents, evidence of the school's self-evaluation and external evaluations of the school's effectiveness. They also reviewed questionnaires returned from 40 parents and carers, 58 pupils and 13 staff.

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

- the accuracy of the school's judgements about its effectiveness and the robustness of its monitoring and evaluation
- the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures
- the school's capacity to make further improvement.

## Information about the school

The school is about the size of most first schools and the number of pupils on the school's roll is increasing. Most pupils are of White British heritage but a growing number is from other ethnic groups. There are more boys than girls and this is particularly the case in Year 3. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the number with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school is subject to reorganisation. It will become a primary school in September 2010. The school has the Activemark, the Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People and a number of awards recognising the strength of its provision for information and communication technology (ICT).

When the school was inspected in January 2009 it was given a notice to improve. The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils were inadequate.

**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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school took prompt and effective action to tackle the weaknesses identified during the last inspection. Its arrangements to safeguard pupils comply with the most recent guidance and governors and senior leaders monitor the implementation and effectiveness of these arrangements robustly. As a result, the school's safeguarding procedures are now good.

The local authority has supported the school very effectively. The senior leadership team, governors and staff have benefited from training that has helped them to improve many aspects of the school's work. Pupils' attainment is broadly average. The outcomes of national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 improved in 2009 and pupils' overall attainment was above the national average. Pupils make generally satisfactory progress during their time in school but this is improving. Teachers are developing new skills and ways of working. These new approaches are not fully embedded in all classes but they are beginning to make an increasingly positive contribution to pupils' learning. In many lessons pupils work with a partner or as part of a group. They work on collaborative tasks and are beginning to plan and organise their learning. This is promoting their independent learning skills. Teachers provide pupils of different abilities with different tasks. These are not always well enough adapted to pupils' needs. Some of the most able pupils do not progress rapidly enough because their tasks are not sufficiently challenging. Teachers do not always consider how pupils will learn. Some pupils are asked to do too much during a lesson and, as a result, their work is not as good as it might otherwise have been.

The school's assessment procedures have improved but systems to check on pupils' progress are complex and some tasks are duplicated. This adds little value to pupils' education and takes time that could be better spent on other activities. Teachers share marking and assessment criteria with pupils. These resources are designed for adult use. They contain long lists of statements that help teachers to make accurate assessments of pupils' attainment. They are not helpful for pupils and could have a negative impact on their learning since the lists of criteria are often longer than the work that is being assessed. Pupils often have three or more targets in a subject. These are often taken from guidance materials rather than from teachers' assessments of pupils' work. They do not help pupils to improve because pupils do not always know what they mean. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but the quality of marking is variable. Some teachers provide helpful comments that promote further improvement but pupils are not given time to act on the advice so the impact of this is limited.

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Pupils say that they enjoy school and feel safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance has improved and it is broadly average. The proportion of pupils that are persistent non-attenders has declined but despite the school's best efforts remains high.

The senior team has a broadly accurate, if occasionally too generous, view of the school's provision and of the areas that require further improvement. There are secure systems to monitor the school's effectiveness and to ensure that gains made in recent months are sustained in the future. The school does not evaluate the information gained from these activities rigorously enough. As a result, senior leaders cannot always provide evidence to support their judgements about the school's effectiveness. Governance is good. Governors' full and positive participation in the improvement process has left them well placed to steer the school through the next phase of its development. Partnerships with parents and carers are good and the school's partnerships with other schools, particularly those brokered by the Catholic extended schools' partnership, do much to enrich pupils' education and to support individual pupils and their families. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further. It provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Improve the school's overall effectiveness by:
  - simplifying the systems used to collect data and information
  - ensuring that information gathered from monitoring activities or assessment is evaluated rigorously and used to promote further improvement.
- Improve pupils' learning by:
  - ensuring that pupils are given suitable and well-targeted guidance that helps them to improve their work
  - focusing on how pupils will learn
  - providing tasks that are well matched to pupils' needs
  - ensuring that new ways of working are embedded and further improving teachers' skills
  - setting realistic, achievable and clear targets for pupils.
- Reduce the proportion of pupils that are persistent non-attenders.
- 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' attainment, as measured by assessments carried out at the end of Key Stage 1, is broadly average but it is improving. A greater proportion of pupils gained the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics in 2009 than did so nationally. Pupils'

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attainment in writing was significantly above average and the gains made in mathematics in 2008 were sustained. Boys attain as well as and sometimes better than girls. In 2009 the attainment of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities was better than that of similar pupils nationally.

Evidence from lesson observations and from pupils' work indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in school but this is not consistent between classes or year groups. Pupils make better progress in some classes than in others because teachers' skills are improving at different rates. The tasks provided for pupils are not always well matched to their needs and the pace of learning can be too slow for some pupils and too brisk for others. The school expects all pupils to progress at the same rate. This is not always sensible or achievable. It does not help the school to gain a secure view of pupils' achievement and identify any potential underachievement. Pupils from minority ethnic groups progress as well as their peers.

Pupils behave well in lessons and there is no disruption but many are reluctant to answer questions or offer their opinions. They respond more confidently when working with a partner or in a small group. In some classes pupils are beginning to assess their work or that of their peers. This is very helpful. It promotes the learning of both parties. Pupils are not always involved in evaluating their progress towards their targets because some targets are too complex and difficult for pupils to understand. Pupils are involved in committees that support the curriculum. The information and communications technology (ICT) committee recently researched the best type of computers to buy, contacted a computer store and negotiated a discount on the order. The library committee shows similar zeal when carrying out its role. Parents and carers say that their children enjoy school. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and all pupils are fully included in the life of the school.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<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	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>

<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.

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b>	
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Most of the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory. There was a small proportion of good teaching and all lessons had some strengths. Teachers have a reasonably accurate view of pupils' current attainment and they are firmly focused on ensuring that all pupils make progress. Despite these good intentions pupils do not progress well enough in all lessons because teachers do not give sufficient thought to how they will learn. Teachers do not make sufficient use of information gained from day-to-day assessment and marking when planning lessons. Marking does not always identify what pupils need to do to improve and even when this information is provided pupils are not given time to act on the advice given. Teachers sometimes expect pupils to do too much during a lesson and the activities provided for pupils do not always help them to achieve the teacher's planned objectives. This is particularly the case in literacy. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enhanced by the school's good provision for ICT and by opportunities for pupils to play sports and acquire physical skills. The school has links with schools in Turkey and Poland. The school's procedures to care for, guide and support pupils are satisfactory. It provides good support for pupils who are bereaved or experiencing stress. It also provides pupils with effective support at key points in their lives, such as the transfer into or out of school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

### How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, staff and governors tackled the issues raised at the time of the last inspection very positively. Senior leaders make well-informed judgements about teaching and pupils' learning and they provide teachers with feedback that helps them

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to improve their work. The school monitors its progress towards key objectives robustly but it has not evaluated the quantity and quality of the information collected or assessed the value of some activities. Some of the school's procedures while well intentioned are unnecessarily laborious. They provide evidence that the school is taking action to improve its work but do not always add value to pupils' education. The skills of middle leaders are satisfactory. Some middle leaders are knowledgeable and well informed and their work makes a positive contribution to the school. Other important areas are not as well led because coordinators lack the skills and experience that are needed.

The governing body has reviewed its committee structure and individual governors have clear responsibilities. Governors have a thorough understanding of the school and they are determined that it will continue to improve. The school is a happy and cohesive community. The senior team has a good understanding of the local and wider community and of the needs of its pupils and their families. The school helps its community to engage positively with people in the wider area and further a field. The school ensures that all pupils have opportunities to learn and make progress.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

When children start school most can do as much as others of their age. They make generally satisfactory progress in all areas of learning during their first years in school. There is some good teaching but much of the provision is satisfactory. Where teaching is good, children learn through well-planned and exciting activities that inspire and motivate them. They develop a range of social skills and interact well with adults and



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other children. In these lessons the teacher uses information about children's learning effectively and plans activities that help all children gain a secure grounding in the basic skills and become interested and independent learners. This good practice is not evident in all classes and some staff miss opportunities to promote pupils' learning.

Parents and carers are very pleased with the provision made for their children. They say that teachers support their children well and that the children settle happily into school. Parents and carers are particularly pleased with the way in which they are encouraged to support their children's learning. They find out about the way their children learn and think that this enables them to support their children's learning at home. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Information about children's progress is not analysed well enough. Staff cannot easily identify areas that require improvement and, as a result, they do not always adapt their teaching to meet particular needs.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
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**

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire or spoke with inspectors are happy with all that the school provides. They have confidence in the school and they feel that their children enjoy their education. They are particularly pleased with the school's 'family atmosphere' and with the opportunities offered through the Catholic extended schools partnership. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about the provision made for their children and about their children's progress. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' views. Pupils are happy at school and the school's involvement in the extended schools partnership does much to enhance pupils' education. Pupils' progress is currently satisfactory but the school is taking steps to ensure that all pupils achieve well during their time in school.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Andrew's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First 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 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	70	13	28	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	48	21	46	3	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	39	22	48	6	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	50	17	37	6	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	54	16	35	5	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	48	16	35	7	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	39	24	52	4	9	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)	18	39	22	48	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	46	21	46	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	28	26	57	1	2	4	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	28	24	52	5	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	28	27	59	3	7	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	57	17	37	2	4	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.**



12 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Blyth, NE24 5BL

Thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your school with the inspection team. As you know, when your school was inspected last year the inspectors felt that it did not do enough to keep you safe and it was given a notice to improve. We came to the school to check that the school had improved. I am pleased to tell you that the school's arrangements to keep you safe are now good. Much of the school's work is satisfactory but there are some strengths and the school no longer requires significant improvement. The local authority has helped the school to improve. As a result, the school has an increasingly accurate view of your attainment and teaching is improving. Teachers have changed the way that they work and they are focusing on what you will learn. This makes lessons more interesting and it is helping you to develop learning skills. You do not progress well enough in all lessons because teachers do not always think about how you will learn. You are sometimes asked to do too much during an activity and the tasks you are given do not always help you to achieve the objective of the lesson. Teachers assess your work very carefully using guidance materials meant for teachers. They share this guidance with you and often use it to set your targets. We do not think that is very helpful because you do not always know what the guidance means. We have asked the school to ensure that teachers use information from lessons and from marking your books when they plan lessons. We think you should have one or two targets that you understand so that you can use them to improve your work.

The staff are working very hard and they collect a lot of information about the school's work. They do not always evaluate the information well enough so they cannot use it to make judgements about the school's effectiveness. We think that they should simplify their systems for collecting information so that they have more time to check on how well the school is doing and plan the next stage in its improvement.

We could see that you enjoy school. We were pleased to see that you are involved in helping the school to improve. We were particularly impressed with your pupil committees and we felt that they make a positive contribution to the school. Most of you attend regularly but a few of you are regularly absent from school. If you do not attend you cannot make the most of all that the school offers so please try to improve your

attendance.

We enjoyed our visit and we wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Graham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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