

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122313
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340123
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Patricia Hodgson
Headteacher	Mrs Bernadette Pye
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Highfield Lane Prudhoe Northumberland NE42 6EY
Telephone number	01661 835484
Fax number	01661 835484
Email address	admin@northumberland.gov.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2010
Inspection number	340123

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited seven lessons and observed five different teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils and spoke with the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including pupils' books, the school improvement plan and pupil progress data. Inspectors analysed 40 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with those from staff and pupils.

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

- the progress made by all groups of pupils particularly those in Years 5 and 6 and in writing
- care, guidance and support, particularly that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and whether this is a strength of the school
- how well assessment is used to accelerate pupils' progress
- the quality of the provision for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. It was a first school until September 2008, after which it began to take pupils in Years 5 and 6. A below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language. An above average number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and holds an Activemark award. The school also offers after-school provision.

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. Pupils make good progress and reach above average standards. The school has improved since the last inspection. Attainment has risen. Pupils' work is assessed more rigorously and their progress is tracked very carefully. Timely intervention in their learning ensures that all pupils get the help they need to achieve well. The school is well led and managed. Governors, leaders and managers know its strengths and weaknesses, assess its work accurately and identify the right priorities for improvement. Hence, the school has good capacity to improve further.

The school provides good care, guidance and support for all pupils. St Matthew's school is a warm and welcoming place where the talents of all pupils are valued. Consequently, pupils behave well, feel safe, know how to stay healthy and are very clear about the importance of caring for each other. Pupils enjoy lessons because they are well taught, follow an interesting curriculum and are keen to succeed.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle into school well and enjoy a good balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. However, opportunities for outdoor learning for Reception children, while satisfactory, are limited by the lack of continuous access to an outdoor area. This means that children cannot move freely between the indoor and outdoor learning spaces. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school and reach above average standards when they leave at the end of Year 6. Attainment is highest in reading and mathematics. Strategies to improve attainment in writing are beginning to have an impact but the school recognises the need to provide even more opportunities for pupils to develop and practice their writing skills.

The school is a very cohesive community and promotes community cohesion well within the local area. It has yet to develop links with communities further afield in order to increase pupils understanding of communities and cultures which are different to their own.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and further accelerate pupils' progress in writing by:
 - allowing pupils extended and sustained opportunities to develop their understanding of writing and practice their skills
 - make more use of pupils good reading skills in developing their writing
 - broadening the use and development of writing skills in other subjects.
- Improve community cohesion by further developing national and international links

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

to enable pupils to better understand communities which are different from their own.

- Improve the provision for outdoor learning for Reception children to allow free-flow between indoor and outdoor learning spaces.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils were seen to be making good progress and achieving well in lessons. They enjoy learning, concentrate on the task in hand and work hard. Work seen in their books and displayed on walls confirmed the good progress pupils are making. All groups of pupils achieve equally well. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given constructive individual help by teachers and teaching assistants so they achieve as well as their peers. From their starting points when they enter the school, pupils make consistently good progress to reach above average standards in tests and assessments at the end of Year 4. In 2010, early test data indicate that the schools first cohort of Year 6 pupils also reached above average standards. Attainment is lower in writing than in reading and mathematics. Strategies to tackle this relative weakness by allowing pupils opportunities to develop their writing skills across all subjects and make use of their good reading skills to further develop their writing are not yet fully developed.

Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. They respect and care for each other and their teachers. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and their spiritual understanding, firmly based on Catholic values, is developed well. Pupils enjoy good opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to their school community as members of the school council, lunch monitors and buddies for younger children. Their basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology are well developed which means they are well prepared for future life.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Consistently good teaching allows pupils to make good progress. Teachers are knowledgeable, explain tasks and ideas clearly and use a good variety of resources to capture the interest of their pupils. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 gained a good understanding of the way seeds are dispersed by watching a well-chosen video extract and handling a range of plants, fruit and vegetables. In some lessons pupils are asked to listen for too long and, hence, have less time for independent and active learning. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully to ensure that any gaps in their learning are identified quickly. Thorough marking of work and helpful feedback gives them clear pointers for further improvement.

The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. It is reviewed regularly and enriched by a good variety of clubs and activities, visits and visitors to the school. Pupils spoke enthusiastically of the opportunities they have to tend the school's award winning eco garden and look after the newly hatched chicks.

The after-school care

is well managed and offers pupils good opportunities to develop their skills and interests. For example, pupils of all ages were seen to be getting expert help to develop their football skills.

The quality of care, guidance and support the school gives is much appreciated by pupils, parents and carers. Every child is very well known to all staff and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported. Very good use is made of outside agencies and specialist teachers to ensure each child is given exactly the right help to maximise their progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Governors, leaders and managers know their school well and have a clear vision for how to improve it further. They communicate this effectively so all staff are clear about their responsibilities and are firmly focused on raising attainment further. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide support and challenge in equal measure. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Staff are appropriately trained and health and safety, and risk assessment policies are in place. The school values the talents and skills of all pupils and, consequently, all make equally good progress. Discrimination is not tolerated. The school has a clear action plan to promote community cohesion and does this well within the school and the local community. However, it has not yet fully developed links with communities further afield or evaluated the impact of this work.

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	2
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	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

Children enjoy learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they are kept busy and the atmosphere is calm and welcoming. They get off to an excellent start in the Nursery. The nursery leader forges very good relationships with parents and carers to help ensure that children feel safe and settle quickly into the Nursery class. A similarly smooth transition occurs when they move up to Reception. All children make good progress from their individual starting points and many reach above average levels of attainment by the end of their Reception Year. Very effective leadership, detailed planning and careful tracking of children's progress all contribute to their success.

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

Teaching is good. All staff understand their responsibilities and teachers, teaching assistants and specialist staff ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well.

The school has a well equipped outdoor space for Nursery children and the provision for their outdoor learning is very imaginative. However, although satisfactory, the space available for Reception children is not freely accessible from the classroom which restricts the free-flow of learning between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Good use is made of the adjacent woodland area to stimulate children's' interest in the outdoors and increase their enjoyment of learning. They were particularly enthusiastic about finding treasures, using sticks to make arrows and discovering that holly is not always prickly.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are supportive of the school and very pleased with the education their children receive. They speak highly of the very good care, guidance and support the school provides and the good progress their children make. Inspectors entirely agree with these views. A few parents and carers feel the school does not communicate with them effectively. Inspectors judge the school's communication with parents and carers to be good but have asked the school to check out what more it could do.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Matthew's Catholic 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 99 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	73	11	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	68	12	30	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	58	14	35	1	3	2	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	63	14	35	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	63	14	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	60	14	35	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	68	13	33	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)	25	63	9	23	3	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	63	14	35	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	55	16	40	1	3	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	48	13	33	4	10	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	23	58	11	28	2	5	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	63	14	35	1	3	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.



8 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, Prudhoe, NE42 6EY

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school last week. A particular thank you to those of you who talked with us and told us about all the things you enjoy doing at school. We were also pleased to hear about how much you enjoyed looking after the eco garden and the chicks. Please thank your parents and carers for filling in our questionnaire.

These are some of the things we have said about your school in our report:

- yours is a good school where you achieve well and reach above average standards
- the good care, guidance and support you receive is a strength of your school
- you behave well, work hard and attend school regularly
- your school is well led and managed, you are well taught and follow a good curriculum.

These are the things we have asked your school to do to help it to improve even further:

- help you improve your writing so it is as good as your reading and mathematics
- give you more opportunities to understand people from communities and cultures which are different to your own
- improve the outdoor learning area for children in the Reception class.

You can help your school become even better by working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ann Wallis

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.