

St George's CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134472
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	341475
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Millett

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	339
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Chown
Headteacher	Mrs Janine Gleeson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, the school's monitoring records and analyses of pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors also analysed the 57 questionnaires returned by parents.

- attainment on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage
- the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1
- how the curriculum has been developed and how effective it is in meeting the needs of all learners
- how well the school is equipping pupils for life in multicultural Britain.

Information about the school

St George's Church of England Primary School is a larger-than-average school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, the remainder representing a number of other heritages. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of two Reception classes and morning and afternoon Nursery classes.

The school has received several awards including the Healthy Schools award, Artsmark gold, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents silver award and the Activemark. Wrap-around care is managed by a private provider and makes use of school facilities. This was inspected separately.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St George's is an outstanding school with good capacity to improve further. Its effectiveness was described very accurately by a parent who said of their children, 'They go to school happy, return happy and are progressing well educationally.'

At the heart of the school's success is the tremendous drive and ambition of the headteacher, which is shared by all senior leaders, staff and governors. There is a corporate desire to provide the best for all pupils and the school is highly successful in reflecting its creed of 'Many hearts make a school'. The vision for excellence is backed up by rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. Staff at all levels have a clear picture of what the school currently does well and what needs to improve. Recommendations for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed.

During their time at school all groups of pupils make good progress including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Needs are quickly identified and high quality, targeted support is given. More able pupils are challenged and so progress very well, particularly at Key Stage 2. The quality of learning in lessons is good and in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as science, pupils reach high standards. Behaviour throughout the school is good and pupils say that they feel safe and have confidence in their teachers. 'At St George's I feel safe and protected. If there is a problem it will be sorted out,' wrote one pupil. Pupils think deeply about others and are keen to take on responsibilities across the school. There is an extremely high level of involvement in the local community. Pupils' experiences of different cultures and religious beliefs are enhanced through the curriculum, visits and visitors. Their knowledge and understanding of other ethnic and cultural groups extends well beyond the local community. The school does everything possible to secure good attendance but this remains no better than satisfactory due to family holidays taken in term time. Teaching throughout the school is good with some examples of outstanding teaching seen. The school has identified the need to build on this to improve the quality of teaching even more. Lessons are very interesting and engage the pupils. Teachers have high expectations and pupils strive to meet these; consequently attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Teachers provide a wide variety of tasks to suit the range of abilities in their classes. Teachers build on the very effective start that children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage and learning and progress are, overall, good in Key Stages 1 and 2.

All pupils enjoy school immensely. This was acknowledged by one pupil who said, 'I really think this school is fantastic. Every day you learn new things.' Another wrote

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about being 'inspired'. This accurately describes the impact of the innovative and extremely rich curriculum presented to the pupils.

Another key strength is the outstanding pastoral care offered to pupils. Adults know the pupils extremely well and ensure that all pupils, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, are able to take full advantage of what the school has to offer. Consequently, pupils develop into thoughtful, considerate and mature young people. This was illustrated well in one class through the successful use of 'circle of friends' where pupils supported and encouraged each other. As a result of this splendid provision, the pupils display a deep sense of pride in their school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by:
 - giving staff more opportunities to share and build on existing outstanding practice
 - ensuring consistency in marking so all pupils are aware of how to improve their work.
- Improve attendance rates by working closely with parents to reduce the number of absences due to holidays taken in term time.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are very motivated to do well. Their good behaviour and enthusiasm are in response to the good teaching they receive which enables them to achieve very high standards. The attainment of children entering the school varies greatly from year to year, although it is almost always below that expected in communication, language and literacy skills. Children get off to a strong start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and this prepares them well for learning as they move up through the school. Past inaccuracies in assessment have been rectified and the school now has a true picture of the attainment and good progress in Key Stage 1. Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 so by the end of Year 6 they are reaching very high standards.

Pupils thrive in the nurturing atmosphere of the school. They are lively and energetic and have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe. The nutritious school meals are very popular and receive high praise from satisfied diners. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective, assertive and confident. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school council is active and makes a significant contribution to the life of the school, managing their own budget. Behaviour in and around the school is good and all the play spaces are happy and harmonious places. Pupils are rightly very proud of their charity work and through this are learning very effectively about their wider global responsibilities. These, together with their very good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, ensure they are getting a good grounding for the future.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Lessons observed during the inspection had strong features; a number were outstanding. Relationships are excellent and all pupils want to do well for their teachers. Pupils' books are marked regularly. Teachers' comments are supportive and usually provide pupils with good guidance on how to improve their work though this can be inconsistent. Questioning during lessons is very successful and offers either good support or challenge to individuals and groups.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is enhanced exceptionally well by the rich and varied opportunities with which they are provided. Staff have successfully developed an outstanding curriculum that responds very well to the diverse needs of individuals and groups as well as being creative. Careful planning reinforces the natural links that occur between different subjects. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, visits and residential trips at home and abroad.

Parents appreciate the caring ethos of the school. 'The school has been welcoming and caring' and 'If I have any problems staff are always there to listen' are typical comments. All staff do their utmost to ensure that each pupil's individual needs are

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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fulfilled. The school is very successful in supporting vulnerable pupils who can find school difficult.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. Rigorous monitoring of pupils' performance and constant self-evaluation are the foundation of the school's success and demonstrate leaders' high aspirations. All teachers are involved in the tracking of pupils which has led to continuous improvement. Current priorities include improving teaching even further. Governors know the school well and have contributed effectively to improvement since the last inspection. They are very involved in the life of the school. The school demonstrates a deep commitment to equal opportunities for all. The rigorous monitoring of pupils ensures that any unevenness in academic performance or personal development is addressed immediately.

Extremely strong links exist with cluster schools, external agencies and local services. Parents value the support that they and their children receive from the school. Safeguarding procedures are extremely thorough and risk assessments and health and safety procedures are in good order. The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well. Pupils from all backgrounds get on well with each other and there are regular celebrations of other cultures and beliefs. The impact of the school on the local community is immense. The church, Boys' Brigade, and Holiday Club are examples of some of the groups that use the premises. Pupils are very aware of the diversity of British society today and they understand and accept difference with great maturity. Their knowledge and understanding of the wider world is extensive.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1

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 effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

After a period of instability due to staffing changes, the Early Years Foundation Stage is now well managed and many good and, in some cases, high quality systems are in place to ensure that the youngest children receive the best start to their school life. The majority of children enter Nursery with skills and abilities that vary from year to year but which are broadly in line with national expectations except in communication, language and literacy, which is well below. Effective induction arrangements and a wide range of information for parents help children make a confident start. Good welfare arrangements and positive relationships ensure that children feel very safe and secure, settle quickly and progress well.

The vibrant, stimulating environment ensures that children have a variety of interesting and creative activities which sustain their interest, help to develop self-esteem and provide pleasure in learning new skills. Indoor and outdoor provision is of the same good quality. Children play well, independently of adults, becoming active and curious learners. During the inspection, a group of Reception children were particularly fascinated by the puppet from space that they helped to read new words.

Staff are well led and work increasingly effectively as a team. They intervene accordingly to boost children's learning, support their language development and get them thinking for themselves. Staff recognise the need to provide even more opportunities for writing. Children's achievements are recorded in attractive and systematic ways such as the 'Learning Journeys' which are shared with delighted parents. The 'Learning Stories', which are child initiated, are examples of exemplary practice. Information on children's starting points and outcomes are used to check progress and plan consistently imaginative and challenging activities.

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

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Views of parents and carers

The response to questionnaires wasn't high but it is clear that the school enjoys the confidence and support of the very large majority of parents who did respond. Most responses to questions were overwhelmingly positive and many added comments praising the school's work. In particular, all parents who completed the questionnaire agreed about how much their children enjoy school, that school keeps their children safe and that the quality of teaching is good. A very small minority noted their concerns about how effectively the school keeps them informed about their child's progress. Information gathered during the inspection suggested that the school has systems in place to include parents in discussions on progress. All parents stated that, overall, they were happy with their child's experience 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 George's CofE VA 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 339 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	67	19	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	60	23	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	47	26	46	4	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	42	30	53	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	51	28	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	46	26	46	5	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	49	26	46	2	4	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)	19	33	32	56	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	47	27	47	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	35	30	53	2	4	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	40	30	53	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	46	27	47	3	5	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	53	27	47	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.



25 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's C of E VA Primary School, Darlington, DL2 1LD

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently, and a special 'thank you' to those members of the school council who gave up their time to talk to us. Many of you told us how very much you enjoy being at school. We believe that St George's provides you with an outstanding education. These are the things that we liked most about your school.

- You are very friendly, polite and helpful to visitors and each other.
- Your behaviour is good.
- You get off to a good start in the Nursery class and make good progress over your time in the school to reach very high standards.
- You enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe.
- Teaching is good and teachers make lessons interesting and exciting.
- The school is very well led and managed, and almost all your parents are very pleased with the school and the help you receive.
- You show a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles and know how to stay safe.
- You contribute extremely well to the life of the school and the local community.
- Your school is helping you prepare well for the next stages in your education.

To make your school even better:

- we would like your teachers to share ideas with each other so that more lessons are outstanding
- we would like your teachers to give you more information when they mark your work so that you can continue to reach very high standards
- we would like you to try very hard to come to school every day so your learning is not interrupted.

I know you are very proud of your excellent school and I am sure you will continue to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Christine Millett

Lead inspector

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