

St Matthew's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108721
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	309779
Inspection date	22 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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 on roll	
School	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin Carey
Headteacher	Mr Martin Humble
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2005
School address	Alnwick Grove Jarrow Tyne and Wear NE32 5YT
Telephone number	0191 4898355
Fax number	0191 4226395

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work, assessment information, documents, interviews and discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils and a governor. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects:

- the quality of provision in the Reception Year of the Foundation Stage
- how well teachers use marking and assessment to support pupils' learning
- pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by those presently in Years 2, and in English, mathematics and science by those presently in Year 6.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-size primary school serves mainly Roman Catholic families in Jarrow, a locality where socio-economic characteristics are below average. A lower than usual proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. Almost all pupils have a White British heritage. None is learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent academic progress and reach outstanding levels of personal development and well-being in St Matthew's Roman Catholic Primary School. In this outstanding, inclusive school the very effective leadership of the headteacher and senior team ensures that the whole staff successfully promote the school's Christian values and their belief that every child matters. The school works extensively with parents, the church and local heritage and outdoor centres to benefit pupils' education and development. An overwhelming majority of parents hold the school in the highest regard. One parent's comments reflect their appreciation. 'My daughters have both thrived in St Matthew's. The school is welcoming both to children and parents and the staff are extremely caring. The headteacher has managed to balance good discipline with a happy school. It is important that children learn Christian values and a sense of self-worth and this is what the school gives.' Pupils too are full of praise for the school and like it just the way it is.

Pupils make excellent progress overall. Their levels of development on entry to the school are lower than typical for their age, especially in their communication and language skills. They make good progress in the Reception Year and begin Year 1 with standards that are broadly average, although their standards in communication and language remain below average. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress overall. In 2007, standards were above average, especially in mathematics. Boys did not do as well as girls in reading and writing. Year-on-year, Year 6 pupils have reached standards above the national average in all subjects. In 2007 their English results at the highest levels, were outstanding and well above national averages. Taking pupils' starting points into account, this represents excellent achievement. Very effective support ensures pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do better than their counterparts elsewhere. The school exceeded its challenging targets in national tests in 2007. Following careful analysis of results, the school accurately identified the need to improve communication and language skills in Reception and Key Stage 1. Strategies for improvement are beginning to pay dividends. Current Year 2 pupils have made good progress and more have reached the highest levels in reading than previously. School assessments and inspection evidence show current Year 6 pupils have sustained high standards this year.

Excellent pastoral care, enhanced by new arrangements for promoting relationships and emotional development, and an excellent, varied programme of visitors, visits and after-school clubs, all play a vital part in fostering pupils' outstanding levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The range and quality of pupils' art is particularly impressive. The school very successfully develops amongst pupils a very positive outlook on life, respect for others and good levels of confidence and maturity. Pupils say they feel safe and they act sensibly, considerately and courteously in the communal parts of the school. Those playing energetically outdoors do not spoil the enjoyment of others. Behaviour is impeccable in classrooms. Pupils' attendance is above average: they thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Pupils know the importance of good health and fitness and many enjoy taking part in voluntary sports and other activities. They take justifiable pride in their excellent contribution to school life as school councillors, and to the peer mediator and buddy systems which support other pupils and minimise bullying. They willingly support charitable work to help worthy causes both locally and further afield. Pupils' positive attitudes, advanced social development and excellent basic skills prepare them very well for their future.

Pupils' high achievement is a result of excellent teaching coupled with a very rich and exciting curriculum that inspires them to learn. Teachers and assistants work very well together to give support which ensures that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, can fully participate in lessons. Interesting, well-suited activities, and a lively pace combined with skilful questioning leads pupils to take part wholeheartedly and work industriously. Each term in Key Stage 2, teachers carefully set targets in English and mathematics that challenge each pupil to reach higher standards. Marking congratulates pupils on their accomplishments. Pupils feel very satisfied that they know how well they are doing and that their teachers help them to do better in their work. Most marking gives pupils clear pointers to improve although this is not always the case.

Excellent leadership and management ensure pupils' outstanding achievement and personal development, which reflects the best of value obtained from resources. The senior leaders and managers have a broadly accurate picture of the school's strengths and, although they are modest in judging their own contribution, they make excellent use of information to plan and carry out improvements. Governance is good. Governors receive informative reports from senior staff about all aspects of school life. They have a clear knowledge of the school, and know their next step is to develop their role in strengthening their first-hand view of its work and involvement in evaluation. They meet all their responsibilities and current government requirements including, for example, to safeguard the welfare of pupils. The governors and leadership team have made sure that the school has improved well since the last inspection. Given the school's track record of sustained high standards and achievement, even more ambitious goals are within reach. It has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of provision in the Reception class is good. When they join the class, children's starting points are below those typical for their age, especially in communication and language skills. They make good progress and by the end of the Reception year in 2007, their skills and abilities in their personal development and in mathematics were broadly average. However, their communication, language and literacy skills remained below average. Provisional assessments show a similar picture for this year. Good leadership and management ensure good teaching and a good curriculum. Planned activities effectively use indoor and outdoor facilities to engage children's interest and foster good learning. Teachers and assistants diligently maintain good records of children's accomplishments. They know the children well, and ensure they are safe and well-cared for. Parents comment positively about how much their children have settled quickly, enjoy school, and learn well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards of communication, language and literacy skills in the Reception class.
- Develop the governors' involvement in monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the work of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Tyneside, NE32 5YT

I really enjoyed my visit to inspect your school this week. Thank you for helping me when I came into your classrooms to see you at work. I did enjoy talking with those of you whom I met. You were well behaved and very polite, and really helpful. I was pleased to see how much you enjoy coming to school and take part in all the different activities and how you value the friendships you make. I was impressed with the many ways you contribute to school life, such as through your school council and as peer mediators and playground buddies. I know your headteacher and all the staff are rightly very proud of you.

Yours is an outstanding school. It is very warm and welcoming and very well organised. All the adults in the school look after you very well. I know that you feel safe. Many of your lessons are outstanding. I was pleased with the way you work really hard and like to take part in lessons and other school activities. Those of you in Key Stage 1 made good progress last year. Pupils in Year 6 made outstanding progress last year and did very well in the tests everyone has to take. I was also pleased to see that pupils who get extra help did well. I saw that many of you in Years 2 and 6 are close to meeting your targets and some of you have already reached them. I was especially pleased with the very good progress in reading you are making. Last year, those of you in the Reception class made good progress in your work, although not as much as hoped for in developing speaking, reading and writing skills. I have asked the school to help you to do better. Also, I have asked that some of the governors come and see you at work to help them make the school an even better one in years to come.

You have very many opportunities at your school to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours faithfully

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector