

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Newhouse

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114269
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378829
Inspection dates	5–6 January 2012
Lead inspector	Clive Petts

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	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jack Boyle
Headteacher	Erica Smith
Date of previous school inspection	2 April 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clive Petts

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed nine lessons taught by five class teachers. He also observed a range of intervention activities for small groups of pupils; talked to different groups of pupils about their learning and scrutinised in detail the work in pupils' books. In addition, the inspector held discussions with pupils, members of the governing body, staff and the school's designated local authority Education Development Partner. The inspector observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including the school's information records relating to pupils' achievement, leadership and management monitoring and evaluation evidence, behavioural records and safeguarding. He also took into account the questionnaires returned by 49 parents and carers, 45 pupils and 14 staff. No responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were available to aid inspection planning.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with none learning to speak English as an additional language. A broadly average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities is close to three times the national average, with very few with a statement of special educational needs. The school has far exceeded the government's floor standards for academic performance in each of the last three years. In September 2010, the headteacher also took responsibility for a small village school in the neighbouring parish. Increasingly, staff expertise is being shared between the two schools.

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	2
Achievement of children	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of children	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Our Lady of Queen Martyrs is a good school. The outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins pupils' exemplary behaviour, respect for others and a great keenness to learn. Pupils are exceptionally well-prepared for the next stage in their learning. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and ensures that pupils thoroughly enjoy their experiences and thrive in a safe, happy, friendly and nurturing environment. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- The achievement of all groups of pupils is good, including those children in the Reception class. Overall, progress is good, but it is more rapid in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 1 to 4, where sometimes there are variations in the amount of challenge and the pace of learning. In these year groups there are some relative weaknesses in the promotion of pupils' reading skills. Pupils thrive especially when their learning is made fun.
- The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding teaching observed which captures the pupils' enthusiasm and constantly challenges their thinking and understanding. However, teaching is not yet consistently challenging and the pace brisk enough in all lessons. More settled staffing and the positive action taken to share best practice are increasing the proportion of good or better teaching, accelerating rates of progress and closing attainment gaps. However, pupils' rates of progress in Years 1 to 4 still lag behind the rapid progress found elsewhere.
- The quality of leadership and management of the school is good. Thorough monitoring and accurate evaluation of the strengths of teaching and learning are leading to greater consistency in good rates of pupils' progress as they move through school. There is robust checking of pupils' progress enabling the school to identify quickly any underperformance and provide sharply-focused programmes of intervention and support. Self-evaluation is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress to be consistently good or better in Years 1 to 4, by:
 - using and building upon the existing imaginative and inspiring practice in the school to ensure a consistently high level of challenge and pace in lessons
 - ensuring that pupils' blending of letters and sounds is relentlessly practised in order to enhance their reading and writing
 - exploiting the developing range of memorable experiences fully in all learning, but especially in pupils' writing, to build their skills systematically.

Main Report

Achievement of children

Since the previous inspection, the school has systematically improved the quality of learning through effective monitoring and checking of pupils' progress. Less effective teaching has been tackled and approaches are increasingly more imaginative so that progress is at least good in the majority of lessons. At times, imaginative strategies adopted in Years 5 and 6 result in exceptional progress. A group of pupils agreed: 'Teachers find ways to make learning fun to push and challenge us!' Accurate self-evaluation ensures that pupils who are not achieving as well as expected, such as when they are consolidating their earlier learning, are quickly identified and appropriate support provided. Positive action to increase the richness of curriculum experiences is capturing more effectively the interest of pupils and adding to their skills and understanding. This is increasing pupils' enjoyment and boosting achievement, particularly in their writing in Years 1 and 2. In lessons, pupils listen well, take turns, speak confidently and enthusiastically, and help each other to clarify their ideas and thinking.

Children settle quickly and happily in the warm, friendly atmosphere in the Reception class and develop an eagerness to learn. This is because of the high-quality relationships the children enjoy with adults. At this early age, the school successfully instils in its children a clear sense of values, self-belief and above all, a desire to learn. A variety of enjoyable activities challenges children's thinking and fosters active learning which enables them to make good progress overall. Positive steps are taken to develop early reading skills, for example when children enthusiastically help their little friend Inky the mouse to search in his letter box for prompts when practising their sounds and letters.

Although all groups of pupils make at least good progress to reach well-above average attainment in their reading by the end of Year 6, the pattern of progress over time is uneven. Attainment in reading by the age of six and at the end of Key Stage 1 is below average, although progress is satisfactory from low starting points. This is because approaches to the teaching of sound and letter relationships in Years 1 to 4 is sometimes drawn out and lacks coherence in practice across the curriculum. Despite reading intervention and support aimed at the lowest-achieving pupils being

thoughtfully targeted, the pace of their learning is not always fast enough to increase reading skills quickly and produce a more consistent pattern of rapid progress through the school. Good use is made of home-school diaries which keeps parents and carers extremely well-informed about their children's development. One comment, 'The school recognises that childhood is precious and ensures that they benefit from a wide range of experiences', sums up the views of almost all. Older pupils' love and enjoyment of a wide range of reading is a particular strength and a key factor in their often impressive achievements in all subjects.

Children enter school with skills which are below those typical for their age, with their speech and language skills often underdeveloped. By the time that they leave school, levels of attainment in English and mathematics are above average and sometimes high. This represents good and occasionally excellent achievement overall, relative to their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good and occasionally outstanding progress, because their learning is carefully planned and the care and guidance that they receive is of a high quality. The school's effective actions have maintained this trend over time, despite the variations in the make-up of cohorts. School information and inspection findings confirm that more effective approaches to teaching and more settled staffing, are quickening rates of progress in Years 1 to 4 to match more closely the rapid and sustained progress in Years 5 and 6. For example, initiatives to improve pupils' writing skills further are proving to be successful with younger pupils. However, the school recognises that the increasing range of memorable experiences provided through the curriculum are not exploited enough to inspire pupils' learning. Similarly, approaches to developing sound and letter relationships require greater rigour, pace and consistency to accelerate the acquisition of early reading and writing skills.

Quality of teaching

Teachers' demonstrate well-developed subject knowledge, set high expectations for behaviour and enjoy excellent relationships with pupils. They endeavour to make learning fun and exciting. For example, older pupils were observed totally absorbed constructing sentences with 'vivacious vocabulary' that 'set you alive'. In another lesson, pupils watched in awe counting out aloud the number of back somersaults a sixth-form pupil from a neighbouring school completed across the hall in a gymnastics lesson. Interest is captured and as a result, pupils demonstrate a high level of engagement and cooperation in lessons, freely exchanging views and ideas. The youngest children engage into conversation with each other spontaneously. Progress is fastest when active learning approaches are thought-provoking, explanations clear, questioning skilfully probes understanding and ample opportunities are provided for pupils of all abilities to apply their skills to meaningful contexts. Teachers foster a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning, and promote self-confidence and a determination to tackle challenging tasks extremely well. For example, when learning about pollination, pupils analytically act out the process, each with a card hat representing a flower, a stigma or a bee. Teachers' marking and on-going written and oral feedback to pupils about their work is of a good quality and guides improvement well. Pupils are encouraged to identify how they can improve their work for themselves. In lessons where progress is satisfactory rather than good, the pace of learning is slower and pupils' thinking is not

relentlessly challenged to maintain the momentum of learning. However, pupils' belief and self-confidence develops considerably over time. Pupils' enthusiasm, positive attitudes to staff and willingness to work collaboratively, which are all encouraged in lessons, are crucial strengths in their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The overall good curriculum has an increasingly sharper focus on basic skills and themes, but younger pupils are not always sufficiently encouraged to use their knowledge of letter sounds to read, spell new words or to write frequently enough. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that their children are taught well and the inspection findings show this to be the case.

Behaviour and safety of children

Pupils' excellent attitudes and their calm, sensible and thoughtful behaviour make a strong contribution to the exceptionally good climate for learning in lessons. All are able to thrive. Pupils report that they are unaware of any instances of bullying in any form. They describe behaviour in classrooms as 'perfect' with only 'little blips' when minor disagreements occur when playing in the yard. Pupils cooperate exceptionally well with each other and demonstrate that they are perfectly capable of resolving any disagreements themselves. All parents and carers responding to the questionnaire agree that behaviour is at least good. Pupils are polite and safety-conscious when moving around the school building. They respect and trust staff and report that staff always listen to their concerns and worries, never failing to take action when appropriate. Their attendance is consistently high and they are always punctual arriving to their lessons. Pupils are acutely aware of how to keep themselves safe and speak confidently and knowledgeably about issues, such as road and e-safety. Their enthusiastic attitudes to all learning enable them to take full advantage of a wide range of artistic, sporting, community and cultural activities provided to support their development and well-being. For example, a group of pupils was observed totally committed, practising their routines as part of the recently-introduced playground singing initiative. Their strong pupil voice is evident in daily school life whether organising food parcels for asylum seekers or suggesting that non-uniform can be worn on a pupil's birthday.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a very clear vision for school improvement and is resolute in her drive to maintain high levels of achievement for all pupils. She is ably supported by a committed and enthusiastic staff team. Effective professional development, including the increasing sharing of best practice with a neighbouring school, is helping to tackle successfully the inconsistencies in pupils' rates of progress. Thorough self-evaluation highlights the right priorities for further improvement, although planning occasionally lacks a sharp enough focus on actions and targets. The increasing experience and expertise of subject leaders is adding to their sense of purpose and their confidence to take risks to enliven learning, especially in Years 1 to 4. The school is highly successful in ensuring that every pupil has an equal chance to learn and succeed. Any evidence of discrimination or inequality is tackled exceptionally well. The improvements taking place to ensure that all teaching is consistently thought-provoking and challenging, clearly demonstrates that the school

has a good capacity to continue to improve. Safeguarding procedures meet the current government requirements with recommended good practice adopted.

Increasingly, the curriculum provides positive, memorable first-hand experiences and rich opportunities for lively, high-quality learning, although basic skills of reading and writing are not always reinforced regularly or systematically enough in Years 1 to 4. The curriculum contributes very well to the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The effective use of partnership working is a particular strength, increasing learning opportunities to develop pupils' imagination and creativity, for example, through the Broadgate Farm project. It also includes developing national and international links which promote a very good awareness of global issues, such as with partner schools in France, Gambia and India. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a variety of social settings in the local and wider community and are given every chance to take responsibility in helping shape school decision-making.

The governing body has an excellent grasp of the needs of the community the school serves. They challenge and hold the school to account in positive ways and are increasingly assured in planning for the future. The school's extremely positive engagement of parents and carers ensures that they are well-informed about all aspects of school life, although occasionally opportunities are missed to involve them in the learning and development of younger children.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



9 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Newhouse, Durham – DH7 9PA

I want to thank you all for the friendly welcome that you gave me when I visited your school to see how well you were learning. I thoroughly enjoyed my time talking to you.

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs is a good and continually improving school, which has a number of strengths. I was really impressed with the excellent relationships your school has with your parents and carers and the way your staff continually encourage and support you to do as well as you can. I was pleased by your exemplary behaviour and the high-quality staff support that you receive. You clearly feel safe and happy because of this. You take considerable pride in helping your school to improve. Your contributions to the local community and the parish are impressive.

The headteacher and the governing body are taking positive action to ensure that the school continues to improve and this can be seen in your sustained rates of good progress and continually improving skills, including your writing. I have asked the school to eliminate inconsistencies in the rate of your progress, especially in Years 1 to 4. I want staff to provide more activities which can excite and interest you to test your thinking. I have also asked that staff share their best practice. In addition, I have also asked that younger pupils are more consistently challenged to practise blending sounds and letters together to form words, when reading and writing.

You can all play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can.

All the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Petts
Lead Inspector

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