

St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Newton Aycliffe

Central Avenue, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 5NP

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The good leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by that of governors, has been instrumental in improving the school and speeding up the progress pupils make.
- Weaknesses in teaching are being tackled successfully. Better tracking of pupils' progress and more systematic teaching of letters and sounds are raising achievement.
- Teachers use a range of interesting resources to make learning enjoyable, explain work clearly and help pupils to become confident, independent learners.
- Pupils feel safe in school and behave well. They are keen to succeed and have good attitudes to learning. Both pupils and their parents are appreciative of the good personal support the school gives.
- In this very welcoming school the talents and skills of all pupils, including those who join the school part-way through their education, are valued and nurtured. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted especially well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Most teaching is good but not outstanding. A small proportion of teaching still requires improvement.
- In some lessons pupils are not always fully challenged to achieve their best and learning does not move on quickly enough.
- Although pupils' progress is good overall, it is not quite as rapid in Reception and Key Stage 1 as it is at Key Stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons and part-lessons which included short visits to classrooms with the headteacher. They also listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of literacy and numeracy to smaller groups of pupils.
- Discussions were held with parents, pupils, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- Eighteen responses to the online questionnaire, 'Parent View', were considered, as well as those from the school's own parental survey and from school staff.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Derek Sleightholme

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority).
- A below-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a similar proportion speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is well above average, while the proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is federated with another primary school in Newton Aycliffe with which it shares a governing body.
- In the last year a well above-average proportion of pupils joined the school (particularly Year 6) part-way through their education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is always good and more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring all groups of pupils are fully challenged to achieve their best
 - marking pupils' work in mathematics to give them clear guidance about exactly what they need to do to improve
 - sharing teachers' best skills even more widely across the school
 - consistently relating work in all subjects to real-life situations to make it more meaningful and relevant for pupils.
- Raise attainment and further speed up pupils' progress, especially in Reception and at Key Stage 1, by:
 - using the results of assessments to identify precisely pupils' strengths and weaknesses and build upon these in future lessons
 - moving pupils' learning on more quickly so that more of them make better than expected progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Reception class with skills which are usually in line with those typically expected for their age although sometimes weaker in literacy and mathematics. They settle quickly into school routines and make good progress in their personal development, learning to follow instructions and share toys and resources sensibly. Most make the progress expected of them but few make better progress than this because their learning is not always moved on quickly enough. Standards in literacy and mathematics for some children remain below average when they enter Year 1.
- In recent years pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 has begun to accelerate, although this improvement has yet to be seen fully in test results and it remains slower than that at Key Stage 2. That said, there are signs of improvement. Results in the most recent screening test in letters and sounds, for pupils in Year 1, were above average. Furthermore, standards at the end of Year 2 in 2012 improved on those of the previous year and, while not average yet, were much closer to it.
- Pupils' progress accelerates further when they move into Key Stage 2 and standards in Year 6 have been above average for two of the last three years. Work in pupils' books and the school's progress data confirm that current pupils are on track to achieve well and reach above-average standards again this year.
- Pupil premium money is spent wisely on extra staff and teaching resources. This allows pupils known to be eligible for free school meals to be taught in smaller groups and has been very effective in speeding up their progress. However, their attainment remains below that of other groups of pupils. Test results show that those supported by the pupil premium were over four terms behind their classmates in English and mathematics in 2012.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as other groups of pupils because they receive timely, sensitive and skilled individual help from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils make good progress in their reading. They have good strategies to decode words and read with expression and meaning.
- Pupils are now making good progress in mathematics and, especially at Key Stage 2, have opportunities to use their mathematical skills in a range of subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and in some lessons there are elements of outstanding teaching. Teachers manage their classes well. Pupils respond to the praise and encouragement they are given by working hard and making good progress.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and give clear explanations which extend their pupils' understanding. In lessons pupils are encouraged to work together. They share ideas and information sensibly and become confident, independent learners.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those supported by the pupil premium make good progress in lessons. They respond well to the extra help they are given by teachers and teaching assistants, particularly when being taught literacy and numeracy in small groups.
- Year 5 pupils made good progress in a mathematics lesson as they confidently calculated the cost of clothing needed to keep them warm on an Antarctic expedition. However, teachers' skills are not yet fully shared and this use of a real-life situation to make work relevant for pupils is not yet used consistently across the school.
- In a minority of lessons the pace of learning is slower because work is sometimes not hard enough to fully challenge all pupils. Work given to younger children does not always build upon

what they have already learnt and can do.

- Pupils' work is marked regularly and marking in English is of high quality so that pupils know exactly what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. It is, rightly, a school priority to improve the marking of work in mathematics to match the quality of that in English.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils typically behave well in school. Records show that there are very few incidents of poor behaviour and these are dealt with very effectively. In class pupils have good attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. Exclusions are very rare.
- Pupils treat each other, staff and visitors with kindness and respect. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is successfully promoted through every aspect of school life: in assemblies, through acts of worship, school clubs, residential experiences and through the subjects pupils study.
- Most pupils arrive on time for school and attend regularly. The school's successful breakfast club has helped to improve the attendance and punctuality of some pupils.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school. This view is shared by parents, who are very appreciative of how the school keeps their children safe and of the good personal support the school gives.
- Pupils know how to keep safe using the internet and are also knowledgeable about different types of bullying. They say there is little bullying in school and are confident that any that does happen will be quickly sorted out. Pupils have a sensible attitude to risk taking and are aware of the dangers, for example, of the misuse of drugs and alcohol.
- Older pupils enjoy taking responsibility. They act as buddies for younger children, are members of the school council and enjoy organising fund raising activities to support charities.

The leadership and management are good

- In the two years she has been in post the headteacher has used her considerable leadership skills to move the school forward. The strengths of the school are celebrated and weaknesses tackled. Improvements to the way in which the progress of pupils is tracked and those who need extra help are identified have already brought about gains in their achievement. Appropriate priorities for development have been identified, so the school is well placed to improve further.
- Teaching is carefully monitored and weaknesses are being tackled. Teachers' performance is well managed and they are given constructive advice on how to improve their teaching. Teachers' best skills have not yet been fully shared and the school recognises that a small amount of teaching is not yet good. However, there have been marked improvements in teaching, particularly in the systematic teaching of letters and sounds, which the school is now building upon so that pupils make even better progress.
- All pupils at St Mary's are given equal opportunities to succeed. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Pupils who enter the school part-way through their education are made very welcome and experience success in both their academic and personal development.
- The local authority now provides light-touch support for the school. The education development partner visits termly and provides support for leaders and managers in, for example, improving teaching and analysing pupils' progress data.
- The school has strong links with parents, who frequently come into school. They say how much the school has improved and how pleased they are with the education their children receive.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about child protection and risk assessment procedures.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. There is a good focus on improving pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy.

combined with the study of exciting topics. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the journey of 'Mary Mouse' who they presented as a mascot to a team of explorers crossing the Antarctic. Pupils were very excited to be visiting the local radio station to talk with the explorers and check on Mary's progress as she crossed the Antarctic wastes.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The school's federation arrangements allow the expertise of the governing body to be shared between two schools. Governors are suitably trained and provide both support and challenge. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's performance compared to schools nationally and monitor its work closely. They are aware of the quality of teaching and how teachers are rewarded and underperformance tackled. They challenge the school about how pupil premium money is spent.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114265
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	405506

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	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean O'Keefe
Headteacher	Barbara Reilly-O'Donnell
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2011
Telephone number	01325 300339
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