

St Aidan's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132145
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	293958
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Dixon

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 on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Marc Palmer
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Steele
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Derwentwater Road Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE8 2HQ
Telephone number	0191 4772690
Fax number	0191 4901953

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of slightly below average size, serving an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage in central Gateshead. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is very high compared to the national average and there are more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than in most schools. The majority of pupils come from the immediate locality, which is subject to redevelopment. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few do not have English as a home language. Movement amongst the pupil population is high. Children enter the Nursery with attainment well below expectations for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that gives excellent value for money. Standards are above average and achievement is outstanding. Many children start school in the Nursery with exceptionally weak listening and speaking skills and few are ready for the demands of school routine. Owing to excellent provision in the Foundation Stage and beyond, they settle in quickly and make rapid progress, although many do not reach the standards expected by the end of Reception. Pupils continue to make exceptionally good progress throughout the school from their low starting points, and make outstanding achievement to reach above average standards in Year 6.

Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are open to new ideas and classrooms are exciting, colourful places for learning. One of many impressive features is the quality of work seen in the pupils' books. An imaginative curriculum has been carefully designed to build up the basic skills of literacy and mathematics, which are so important in pupils' development, as well as offering a wide range of experiences out of school to broaden their horizons. Teachers monitor each pupil's performance carefully and, when needed, quickly take action to help them to improve their work. They are very skilled at matching work to pupils' needs and abilities, particularly in developing their speaking and confidence. Therefore, the pupils make excellent progress, particularly in their speaking and listening skills, and they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life outside of school.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The school's Christian values are clearly evident in the level of care provided, in excellent relationships and in the welcoming, calm atmosphere. Teachers know pupils very well and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other individual needs are well catered for by an inclusive approach, which values each child. Parents agree with this view and say, 'The children are not only taught academics but very good standards of behaviour.' The school's ordered atmosphere and teachers' knowledge of pupils ensures that they feel safe, enjoy school very much, behave exceptionally well and develop a very good awareness of personal safety and how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They willingly take responsibility; such as, their membership of the school council or helping the younger pupils during lunch and play times. Pupils are outgoing, friendly and very supportive of their school and make many contributions to the life of their local and wider community.

The headteacher provides exceptional leadership, monitoring the school's performance, identifying matters for improvement and taking the necessary action. As a result of great cooperation amongst the hard-working, innovative and consistent staff team, the school has improved well since the last inspection, raising standards in English, pupils' attendance and improving the setting of targets. The school knows itself very well. It is a place where pupils thrive and it has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average in Year 6 and pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children start school with attainment which is exceptionally low for their age, especially in language, personal

and social development. They make excellent progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and, by the time they enter Year 1, most are working within the early learning goals. Some children however, remain well below average in communication skills and in emotional and social development.

Pupils continue to make the same excellent progress in Key Stage 1. The results in the 2006 Key Stage 1 national assessments were below average in reading, writing and mathematics but were higher than would be expected given the pupils' low starting points. The results of the Key Stage 2 national tests in 2006 were above average overall and much higher than those of 2005. They were above average in mathematics and science and average in English, and the school exceeded its targets. A consistent focus on listening, speaking, reading and writing has made a major contribution to this improvement in standards. The provisional test results for 2007 are similar to those of 2006 and the school has again exceeded its targets. The work seen in pupils' books across all subjects and years is impressive and shows that all pupils are continuing to make excellent progress, including those who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are excellent. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and that there is never any bullying or intimidation. They enjoy school. Attendance rates are average; the school does all it can to improve them and the majority of pupils attend well. Behaviour is excellent. The few pupils who find it difficult to conform to school routines are managed well and make the same progress as others. Pupils understand the essentials of a healthy lifestyle, take regular exercise and eat healthy lunches. The school holds a number of health-related awards. Pupils respond well to many opportunities to accept responsibility and contribute to the school community. They are also involved in many activities in the local community, including fund-raising, which show their concern for others and their increasing self-confidence. They have very good basic skills and use them well across all subjects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching is consistently good and often excellent, built on mutual respect and high aspirations for all pupils. Pupils enjoy the challenges that are set for them. Teachers and their assistants work very closely together to encourage pupils to think for themselves, share ideas and cooperate in group tasks. Teachers plan well for a wide range of learning activities to involve pupils actively in their learning. For example, every opportunity is taken to get pupils talking about their work and listening to each other. In a Year 1 lesson about Punch and Judy, the pupils' confidence in using language was enhanced through role-play and performance. The presentation of work in pupils' books is exemplary, matched only by teachers' consistent, accurate and helpful marking. Teachers' use of digital technology is excellent as shown, for example, in their use of interactive whiteboards and animation work in Year 6. In the Foundation Stage, teaching is excellent and adults engage well with children, giving them many opportunities to improve their mathematical, literacy and speaking skills and children respond with enthusiasm.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Pupils have extensive opportunities to talk about their work and to learn through listening to each other and the many visitors to the school. Visits away from school give pupils first-hand experiences of the local and wider community and, in unfamiliar surroundings, add to their self-confidence. Subjects and basic skills are taught in an integrated way through stimulating topics of local interest and the resulting portfolios of work are impressive. The curriculum is planned to make excellent use of computer technology in the development of pupils' investigative skills and to give them confidence as independent learners. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage has a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activity, indoors and in the safe outdoor classroom. The many after-school clubs and activities are very well attended, adding to pupils' understanding and enjoyment of the work done in class. The list is impressive but two examples must suffice. The pupils' photographs displayed in the school's art gallery are imaginative, striking compositions. The entrance hall's mosaic demonstrates the high quality of work that can be achieved when every pupil contributes to an art project.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This aspect of the school's provision is outstanding. The learning, social and emotional needs of every pupil are known and provided for by teachers and other staff. Consequently, all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who struggle to adapt to the disciplines of school, are supported effectively and make excellent progress. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet legal requirements. Visitors to the school who are involved with children's health, safety and well-being make a significant contribution to these aspects of care and guidance.

Systems for monitoring pupils' progress over time enable underachievement to be spotted quickly and appropriate measures introduced to tackle it. Pupils receive excellent academic guidance on how to further their education and plan for the future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The headteacher has had a major impact on the school's performance and ethos. She has inspired an excellent staff team who share her sense of purpose and passion for improving pupils' lives and set challenging targets for themselves as well as for pupils. Governance is good. The governors play an active role, linking to areas of the school in order to monitor what is being done. The success of this concentration of effort is shown in the pupils' outstanding progress and the standards they reach, as well as in their enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning. The school's self-evaluation is accurate; it is carried out by the headteacher and subject coordinators and is based on frequent monitoring of lessons, teachers' planning and pupils' work. Assessment information is used relentlessly to focus teachers' attention on individuals who need support, as well as to lift standards in all classes. There are very strong relationships within the community and with partner schools, and the school leads the local literacy network. Parents are very supportive of the school and what it is doing.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

9 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Aidan's Church of England Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE8 2HQ.

You may remember that we inspected your school and we want to thank you for the welcome you gave to us and for being so polite and helpful when we were there.

We think yours is an excellent school. Some of the important things we noticed were as follows:

- the headteacher and staff are working to improve your school by arranging lessons full of interesting things to do and exciting ways of doing them;
- the teachers keep track of how well you are doing and devise ways to help you learn new things
- you enjoy lessons and try hard to improve your work
- your behaviour is excellent, in lessons and around the school
- the way that teachers and others look after you is outstanding, making sure you are safe in school and that you always have someone to talk to about any problems
- you respond exceptionally well to what the school provides for you and you make the most of your chances to meet visitors and go on visits.

Your parents think that this is an excellent school and we agree with them. We hope that you will continue to work as hard as you can and do as well as you can so the school can get even better.

Yours sincerely

Colin Dixon

Lead Inspector