

St Pius X Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114249
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325974
Inspection date	8 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	76
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Warnaby
Headteacher	Mrs Joanne Cruise
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Thornfield Road The Grove Consett County Durham DH8 8AX

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	8 May 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- improvements to standards in mathematics
- the impact of pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being on their learning
- the effectiveness of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Evidence was collected from discussions with the headteacher, who is also the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the chair of governors, the mathematics leader and a group of Year 6 pupils. In addition, parts of lessons were observed, school documents, samples of pupils' work and the parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This very small school serves an area of high social and economic disadvantage on the outskirts of Consett. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, including an above average number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. All pupils are White British. Almost a third of pupils join the school at times other than the typical starting point into the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises children working alongside Key Stage 1 pupils. Recent awards include a Healthy School and a sporting award. The headteacher was appointed following the previous inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Pius X is a good school that has the overwhelming support of its parents. It is outstanding in some areas. The expectation that every child is treated as an individual pervades all the school's work and is much appreciated by parents, for example, the comment that, 'St Pius is a special, welcoming place where the children are treated as members of a family, with great warmth, care and concern by all staff', typified the views of many. The school prides itself on its commitment to provide a fully inclusive education for all its pupils whatever their ability. Parents' comments such as, 'The progress my children have made since starting this school is absolutely amazing', and 'In my view this school goes beyond the normal to understand their pupils and are committed to excellence in all areas'. The inspection team agrees with parents in many respects. The personal development and well-being of the pupils are outstanding because the individual needs of pupils are met most effectively. The excellent care, guidance and support provided for pupils ensure that they all achieve as well as they are capable in an atmosphere of trust and harmony. External partners make an excellent contribution to pupils' well-being.

By Year 6, pupils have made good progress and achieve well based on their well below expected levels of attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in communication, language and literacy. Standards reached in national tests fluctuate year-by-year because of the small numbers in each year group and the above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, over the past three years pupils have made consistently good progress. In 2008, the school exceeded its targets for English and mathematics, with an above average number of pupils reaching higher levels. Overall, the trend for standards is that they are broadly average over the past three years. Although there was a dip in 2008 national test results, the school met its targets for those pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make rapid progress. This is a result of the equal access they have to the learning of a whole class and the skilled support they receive.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils show high levels of respect for themselves and for others. For example, they are aware that their fundraising for the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development makes a difference for many others living in less favourable circumstances. Pupils' excellent enjoyment of school is evident in their above average attendance, which is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Key responsibilities held by older pupils to, for example, manage a healthy food snack bar at break and to understand the need to keep fit, are recognised in a Healthy School award. Older pupils help to ensure pupils are safe in the playground through their buddy scheme. Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around school. Pupils are well prepared for their future learning. There are strong links with local secondary schools and specialist modern foreign language teachers work in school. All of this contributes to a very smooth transition to the next stage of learning.

The quality of teaching is good. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are a high priority without detracting from the challenge of providing for more able pupils. Relationships are excellent and the pace in lessons is good. All pupils work together, irrespective of their ability. Work is well matched to the individual needs of the pupils. This aspect of provision is excellent and contributes significantly to developing high levels of self-esteem and confidence in the large proportion of vulnerable pupils. Lessons are well planned to reflect the mixed-age ranges in each class. Teaching assistants provide very worthwhile support. Whiteboard

and information and communication technology is used well to enrich learning. Sometimes a lack of practical mathematical resources limits pupils' ability to understand new ideas. The good curriculum provides a wide range of enriching activities. Pupils spoke with great enthusiasm of their enjoyment of creative activities, for example, art, music and physical education. They are rightly proud of their achievements as school counsellors because of the improvements they have made in getting cycle racks and decorating the toilets. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are excellent. Specialist agencies are involved in supporting vulnerable pupils in close partnership with parents. A high priority is given to ensuring that pupils are safe in and out of school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. There are very detailed systems in place to track the academic progress of the pupils, but they are too comprehensive and time-consuming for staff because they rely on analysis by the headteacher and less so on technology.

Leadership and management are good. There are outstanding features in the headteacher's drive for improvement and the high expectations set for everyone. School self-evaluation is an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and areas for development. It matches the outcomes of the school's own monitoring and in the case of mathematics rightly highlights a lack of practical resources and a need to tackle weaknesses in mathematical knowledge. As a result, progress is being made on many fronts, spurred by the palpable passion, enthusiasm and hard work of the headteacher and staff. A comprehensive analysis of the results of all mathematical testing throughout school has taken place and identified the actions needed to improve standards. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It understands the need to engage with the local community to provide pupils with an awareness of the widespread ethnicity, faiths and cultures in the wider community. For example, links with a neighbouring school, a European school and a multicultural week all begin to develop pupils' awareness of the diversity in communities. Particularly good attention is given to exploring and learning about many faiths through religious education. The ethos the school is built upon is a value system where every person is unique and special. The school has a good capacity to improve. It has maintained improvements since the previous inspection. Governors are well involved in the school and value the good quality detailed reports provided regularly by the headteacher.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are well below age-related expectations, especially in communication, language and literacy. By the time they join Year 1, some have reached nationally expected levels although others remain below the nationally expected level. All make good progress because teaching is effective. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make similar progress to their peers. Children settle quickly into school routines because transition arrangements are good. There is a happy atmosphere in this safe and caring environment and good relationships with parents. Children are well cared for and good welfare systems are in place to ensure they are safe and secure. Every child has an identified key worker who looks after them, and who has overall responsibility for communication between home and school. They are encouraged to adopt healthy eating habits through schemes such as the healthy tuck shop and the school fruit scheme. Children's personal development is outstanding. They behave very well, respond to instructions, cooperate with each other readily and show positive attitudes to learning. Staff make regular observations and assessments to plan the next steps of learning. These observations enable activities to be well matched to children's learning needs. As a result, there is a good

balance between adult-led activities and those from which children can choose. Good use is made of the indoor and outdoor facilities, and this fosters children's development in all areas of learning. Children are encouraged to become independent and thoroughly enjoy taking a full part in activities, for example, a small group of children became interested in kites and were engrossed in designing and making their own kites. Leadership and management are good and are characterised by a common approach and a determination to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a more simplified and uniform assessment system that tracks the progress of pupils throughout each year and over their time in school.
- Make more use of practical resources in mathematics to help pupils understand new ideas in numeracy.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Pius X Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham, DH8 8AX

Thank you for making the inspectors' recent visit to your school so enjoyable. Please also thank your parents for their helpful comments. You attend a good school with outstanding features in the ways in which your personal development and well-being are promoted and the excellent level of care, guidance and support you receive. Those of you who find learning more difficult are superbly well supported. You really like that you do not have to leave the class to have additional work to help you to improve.

This is what is good:

- you are all working hard to improve in all subjects you learn
- you behave extremely well and listen and attend well in lessons
- some of you who find learning more difficult are making excellent progress because you are so well supported
- teaching is good and you all enjoy learning, especially in art, music and PE
- all the adults working in school are very skilled and keen to make sure you all achieve as well as you are able
- parents think your school is fantastic in every way.

There are a few things that could be better. When you are solving mathematical problems some of you would understand better if you used practical equipment to work out your calculations. Your school has a very comprehensive system to check how well you are learning, but this could be made simpler by using a computer program and give more time to continue making learning fun for you all.

Good wishes to you all and good luck for the future!

Yours faithfully

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector