

St Pius X Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114249
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378824
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead inspector	Gordon Potter

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	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Renwick
Headteacher	Joanne Cruise
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Gordon Potter

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 12 lessons taught by four teachers, including joint observations of several classes with the headteacher. The inspector held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers and spoke to the school's local authority improvement partner. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. He also scrutinised the 46 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as questionnaires from pupils and 15 staff. The inspection team took account of the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a few pupils from Eastern European backgrounds who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. More pupils than is usual join the school during the course of their education. The school has Enhanced Healthy School status. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectation for attainment and progress.

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 pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It encourages pupils to behave outstandingly well and provides excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is not an outstanding school because, while there is much good teaching which enthuses pupils and offers them challenge, teachers occasionally miss opportunities to allow pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils' achievement is good. From starting points that are generally well below age-related expectations on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress to attain standards that are average at the end of Year 6. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers make clear what pupils will learn and check their understanding during lessons. Work is well-matched to pupils' individual needs and there are many opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in all subjects. Occasionally teachers offer too much help and limit opportunities for pupils to work things out themselves, especially in mathematics. Opportunities are missed to give pupils short-term targets that will help them take the next steps in their learning.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school. They enjoy school greatly and say that misbehaviour is uncommon, although when it does occur it is effectively dealt with by their teachers. Attendance is above average.
- Leadership and management are good. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, all staff have implemented strategies which have improved the quality of teaching and the curriculum and raised attainment and attendance. They are rigorous in using data and monitor teaching effectively. Leaders and managers accurately evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use the outcomes astutely to target further improvements. The governing body supports senior leaders well and offers robust challenge.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer of 2013, increase the rates at which pupils make progress and raise attainment, by:
 - providing pupils with even more opportunities in lessons to work independently or together in a range of open-ended, investigative activities which develop independence, confidence and organisational skills, especially in mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils have clear short-term targets which will help them understand how to take the next steps in their learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enjoy lessons. They are extremely hardworking and very eager to give of their best. They respond well to good teaching that stimulates their learning. They enjoy being actively involved in finding things out for themselves and respond positively to challenging activities. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 were engaged in exploring outside to share and gather ideas for writing poems about spring. Skilful teaching helped them to understand and use poetic techniques so that they made good progress and produced imaginative and evocative poems.

Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage but their attainment is below average as they enter Year 1. Pupils make further good progress in Key Stage 1 so that by the end of Year 2, attainment, which has risen in recent years, is average. The improved attainment at the end of Year 2 has not had time to impact on attainment at the end of Year 6 which fluctuates because of small and shifting cohorts, and is typically average. However, pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. Attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 is below average and by the time pupils leave school, it is average. The many pupils who enter the school during the course of their education make good and often excellent progress from their starting points. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make excellent progress because the school identifies their needs accurately and provides highly effective support and challenging teaching.

All parents and carers are of the opinion, rightly, that their children are making good progress.

Quality of teaching

All parents and carers believe that pupils are taught well and inspection evidence confirms this view. In the best lessons, teachers explain clearly to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. They plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, including research, role-play, games and investigations. Teachers use questions well to check what pupils already know and the progress they are making. There are strong relationships and teachers and teaching assistants interact well with pupils to support them in their learning. In English lessons across school, there is good teaching which is strongly focused on extending pupils' writing skills. Teachers use games, work in other subjects, newspapers, stories and drama techniques to stimulate imagination and ideas for writing. They model writing clearly and allow pupils opportunities to develop their skills. Opportunities are occasionally missed in mathematics to allow pupils time to

practise and apply their skills in the exciting ways seen in the best lessons. Teachers occasionally provide too much direction, which impedes pupils' initiative and development as independent learners. Marking is used well to tell pupils how to improve their work. Targets are less well used to help pupils understand how to take the next steps in their learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, a range of engaging activities captures children's imagination, allows them to investigate for themselves and moves their learning on quickly. There is effective teaching of linking sounds and letters so that children make good progress in reading and writing. There is effective and imaginative use of the outdoor area, which stimulates children's creativity and physical development, although increasing numbers mean that the area is now slightly small.

The impact of the planned curriculum is good overall. It has been successful in increasing rates of progress in English and mathematics. There are many activities which help pupils to see the links between subjects and to develop and apply important skills, including writing, solving problems, teamwork and research. Work on topics such as the Ancient Greeks and the local environment, including research into the town's Victorian past and its lost steel industry, develops pupils' understanding of local history and geography. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their writing skills across subjects, although there are fewer opportunities to investigate together in open-ended activities or initiate their own learning in mathematics. Research into life in Africa, exploring the crucifixion and other faiths and cultures, develop pupils' imaginative, artistic, writing and language skills, as well as their cultural understanding. Allied to much excellent work in music, painting and pottery, the overall impact of teaching on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy school very much. They are extremely polite to adults and highly respectful of each other and their school surroundings. Almost all parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaires agree that, overall, there is a good standard of behaviour at the school. Exemplary behaviour was evident in all lessons observed during the inspection and around the school. The inspector analysed the school's records of behaviour over time and talked to many pupils during lessons, at break times and more formally in group discussions. Pupils say that behaviour is excellent in their lessons and that bullying in any form is uncommon. They feel exceptionally safe and know that 'playground mentors', as well as the teachers and other adults in school, will help with any problems if they arise. Pupils particularly appreciate the praise system which encourages them to achieve well, work hard and develop teamwork and social skills. Attendance is above average and the school has worked successfully to improve the attendance of those pupils who have found regular attendance difficult. The school council works very hard on behalf of other pupils. Its members are particularly proud of the actions they have initiated to improve aspects of school life, including improvements to the playground and the school environment, and the money they raise for charities.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has had an excellent impact on driving school improvement. She is ably supported in the drive for improvement by the assistant headteacher, members of the governing body and all teachers. In this small school all staff work effectively as members of a committed and dedicated team. There is skilful delegation of responsibilities, well-targeted professional development and the sharing of good practice. The school has rigorous

procedures with which it analyses pupils' attainment and progress. This enables the swift identification of groups and individuals who need additional support to close any gaps in their learning. Robust monitoring and self-evaluation highlights the right priorities for improvement and leads to effective action to tackle them. Rigorous analysis ensures that the school has a clear understanding of its strengths and where it could improve further.

Capacity to improve is good. All teachers consistently apply the school's procedures to monitor and plan initiatives which have improved teaching and the curriculum and raised attainment. The school is particularly proud of its inclusive ethos and has a clear commitment to and effective systems for promoting equality of opportunities for all pupils to be successful. It tackles discrimination firmly. Safeguarding procedures meet the current government requirements. The school has a range of effective partnerships; for example, to provide opportunities in music and sport, and to support pupils who have a range of learning, emotional and behavioural needs, and their families. Members of the governing body are highly supportive of the school and provide a good level of challenge.

The curriculum is good. There is a strong and effective focus on developing basic skills in English, mathematics and the use of information and communication technology, and good procedures to develop writing skills in other areas of the curriculum. Across the school there is a coherent and systematic approach to teaching reading with a balanced emphasis on letters and sounds, comprehension, and, as pupils become more proficient, opportunities to analyse character and authors' use of language and plot. Well-planned enrichment activities, including visits to residential centres, places of worship and to museums, and visits from coaches, artists and writers, help to develop pupils' strong understanding of their own and other faiths and cultures. Accordingly, pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. This is further enhanced by the school's emphasis on developing pupils' interest in local history and environment and a detailed programme of religious education. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs which promote learning and enjoyment in sporting, artistic and environmental activities.

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 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.
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.



28 March 2012

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school. I particularly enjoyed talking to you about your school and your work. I was impressed with your outstanding behaviour and by your politeness and the exceptional care you show for one another. Your school takes excellent care of you so that you feel extremely safe in school. Most of you attend school very regularly – well done!

You go to a good school and your headteacher and the governing body know how to make it even better. Your teachers make your lessons fun, especially when you learn and explore and investigate together. You told me that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers, your lessons, lunch-time and after-school clubs and visits. Your parents and carers like the school very much.

In order to help you reach higher standards and make faster progress, I am asking your teachers to make sure that:

- you always have enough opportunities to find things out for yourselves and then use what you have learned to improve your skills
- you have clear targets that will help you take the next steps in your learning.

You can help by continuing to do your best and continuing to attend regularly. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Potter
Lead inspector

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