



St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Wingate

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114279
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289863
Inspection dates 2–3 November 2006
Reporting inspector Eric Jackson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wingate
School category	Voluntary aided		County Durham
Age range of pupils	4–11		TS28 5AN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01429 838294
Number on roll (school)	56	Fax number	01429 836294
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Margaret Greener
		Headteacher	Mrs Jane Lewin
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	2–3 November 2006	289863

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a small Catholic primary school. It has recently been linked through federation with another local school, under the leadership of the same headteacher. It serves an area of social and economic disadvantage, and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Children's attainment at entry to the Reception class is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage, with very small numbers of dual heritage. All pupils speak English as their main language. The school is part of a local Excellence Cluster, working in close partnership with other local schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Mary's is a satisfactory school, with good features in its promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being. Parents and pupils love the school, feeling that its warm Catholic family atmosphere is a key strength. One parent wrote, 'This is a lovely school. It makes every child and their family welcome'. The inspection confirms this view. It also confirms the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. Pupils are safe, well cared for, and enjoy their learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The staff's care, support and guidance for pupils are satisfactory overall.

The school has had no permanent headteacher since 2003. The recent appointment of a headteacher who is also headteacher of another local Catholic primary school has brought stability and a new sense of purpose and cohesion to leadership and management. The staff recognise the help given by the previous temporary headteacher, and are eager and determined, under the new headteacher's experienced guidance, to build on the improvement in pupils' achievement made last year. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school's capacity to improve is now good. Following consultations, a good plan to rationalise staffing to eliminate the budget deficit has been agreed by the governing body.

Overall pupils' achievement is satisfactory. At the end of Year 6, results in national tests have generally been below average, for the last five years. Standards in writing and mathematics are the weakest aspect of the pupils' attainment. Results at the end of Year 2 have been improving steadily and rose to average levels in 2006, representing good progress for this group. Children in the Reception class make satisfactory progress towards the set learning goals, achieving levels just below those expected for their age. Significant staff changes in the last two years have strengthened the teaching and are helping pupils make better progress. This is because teachers and support staff have worked hard to raise pupils' expectations of themselves.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and sometimes good. The school recognises that its use of assessment information has weaknesses, and that the curriculum, whilst satisfactory, does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects. Partnership with other institutions is good and the staff work well with other staff in linked schools. A very good example of this collaboration, to develop Year 4 pupils' writing skills creatively, has been recognised as exemplary by the local authority.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Clarify and simplify assessment procedures in order to plan the next stages of pupils' learning more effectively.
- In developing the whole school curriculum, ensure that literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are taught across the full range of subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The few children in the Reception class make satisfactory progress from below average levels at entry. They achieve just below the levels expected nationally by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2. Year 2 national assessment results in 2006 were the highest for six years, representing good progress for this group.

Results at the end of Year 6 have been generally below average, with some variation from year to year. The school's own data on how well pupils make progress, confirmed by the inspection, indicate that their achievement by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory overall and that standards are broadly average, with weaknesses in writing and mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their targets. There is no major difference between the achievement of boys and girls, although the school has identified a potential falling trend in girls' achievement in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. The staff ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and develop healthy lifestyles. Pupils explain clearly the implications of this for their daily lives. The school's Catholic mission fosters an atmosphere of shared values and respect, which is valued by parents and pupils. Year 6 pupils say, 'It's a small school where everyone gets along, and everyone is friendly.' There is a gentle spiritual quality that pervades the school, woven through high quality assemblies, class trips, discussions in class, and even lunchtime in the hall. This helps to promote pupils' good behaviour and their positive response in lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils' cultural development is good in some aspects, such as through visits to France, and in history and sport. It is satisfactory overall as pupils do not learn enough about the diversity of modern British culture. Pupils show a good understanding of the needs of others in their own and other communities. The school council plays a good role through class and council meetings in making suggestions and raising funds to improve provision. Pupils are also generous in supporting a variety of charities. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. As the number of pupils on roll has fallen and staffing has increased, there is now a very high adult to pupil ratio. One pupil said, 'We get more attention, and more education'. Working relationships are good and encourage pupils to want to learn. Staff share with pupils

what they expect them to learn and this is helpful in involving pupils in their own learning. The use of marking and assessment data is variable in quality: where the teaching is most effective, assessment is used well to plan the next steps in the pupils' learning and marking informs them clearly what they must do to improve. There has been a major focus on improving pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics, which has already led to improved results at the end of Year 2.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets requirements. Staff plan work using national guidance and are careful to ensure that pupils in different year groups in mixed age classes receive their entitlement. There is an effective range of enrichment activities through visits and after school activities. There is some innovative development. Staff work with other schools to develop new ideas, and there is great potential for further development through the close links with the partner school in the federation. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology in helping pupils learn.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for. The arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements fully. Procedures for keeping pupils safe are in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive satisfactory and sometimes good support and guidance. The teaching and support staff work together effectively to promote pupils' learning. A parent of a pupil requiring extra help wrote, 'My child is in the best place possible at this time in his life'. Support and guidance for personal development are often good; academic support and guidance are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory and, with new appointments, there is now good potential for further improvement. The recently appointed headteacher is excited by the possibilities of collaborative development across the two schools she now leads. She has already put in place systems and procedures to enable settled leadership and management, and tightly focused staff development, to accelerate the school's improvement. In discussion with the staff and the experienced chair of governors, the desire, willingness and capability to take the school forward are powerfully expressed. New plans have already been agreed for raising standards, regularising the budget (to a format developed by the previous temporary headteacher), and giving staff freedom to further develop their areas of responsibility. Through recent monitoring and evaluation, there is a clear understanding of the school's current position and the

action needed to take it forward. Governance has improved and is now satisfactory. The federated governing body is enthusiastic in overseeing the changes planned for the school.

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Wingate

County Durham

TS28 5AN

6 November 2006

Dear Children

You will remember that I visited your school recently to check how it helps you to learn and develop. First of all, I want to thank you for your friendly welcome and for talking to me about St Mary's. You and your parents clearly love it, and you helped me in making my decisions.

Your school has some really strong points. Its best feature is your personal development; you all behave well and concentrate in lessons. You said that the staff care for you so that you feel safe, and that the school is like a close family where everyone is friendly. I shared that feeling too during the assembly about the sad old woman: you all joined in so well in the drama, then sang the hymn tunefully with shared enjoyment.

You also make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects. Years 3 and 4 certainly know a good deal about the Roman army in Wallsend, and I know that Years 5 and 6 are looking forward to going to France. Perhaps some of you could swim there! I hope Granny likes the letters that Reception and Years 1 and 2 wrote to her – I enjoyed reading them.

I have asked the staff to make sure that you reach the levels that they know you can by the time you are ready to leave for high school. To help with this, they are going to involve you more in knowing what you can do to improve, and to help you develop your skills better in all your lessons. You can help by continuing to listen carefully, by discussing your work with your friends, and making sure that you try to improve in the way the staff suggest. I'm sure you will.

Thank you once again for welcoming me into your school family. May I wish you all the best now and in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Eric Jackson

Lead Inspector