School report

St Benet's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Fulwell Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR6 9QU

Inspection dates	7–8 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	**Good**	**2**
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders at all levels have a good understanding of the school's strengths and where the school needs to develop further. They have ensured that teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are proud to be members of the school. They are happy, safe and behave well. Parents agree and hold the staff in high esteem for the care they provide for their children.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers make learning interesting and understand what different pupils need to help them learn quickly. Pupils are keen to learn and, as a result, make good progress.
- Children get off to a good start in their learning in the early years. They make good progress and by the end of Reception they are well prepared for Year1.
- Pupils' achievement is good from their starting points, which are typical for their age. They reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6.
- Governors are well informed about the strengths of the school and ensure that pupils are safe and happy at all times. They are ambitious for the school's further development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. The curriculum gives pupils ample opportunities to take part in a wide range of experiences that reflect life in Britain today. They are given roles of responsibility from an early age and this plays a part in helping them grow into confident and capable citizens.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in mathematics, although above average, are not as strong as in reading and writing.
- Pupils are given too few opportunities to develop and practise their mathematical skills in mathematics and other subjects.
- Pupils' basic mathematical skills are not securely mastered in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Governors do not challenge and hold senior leaders to account rigorously enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons or parts of lessons. The headteacher and deputy headteacher took part in two joint observations with inspectors. Inspectors also listened to pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, members of the governing body including the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils and talked to pupils informally during break and lunch times. They also talked to parents at the start and end of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books and children's learning journals. They considered data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring information and information relating to safeguarding and child-protection.
- Inspectors took account of the 56 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 15 inspection questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils during morning playtime and lunch time.

Inspection team

Peter Evea, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Pattinson	Additional Inspector
Lesley Richardson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Only a very small proportion of disadvantaged pupils is supported by the pupil premium. The term disadvantaged is used to describe those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority. Both these groups are eligible for support through this additional funding.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been significant changes in staffing including at senior leader level since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the skills of the governing body so that they are better able to challenge and hold leaders to account in their drive to bring about further improvements in pupils' achievement.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding to raise achievement further, especially in mathematics by:
  - providing pupils with more chances to use and develop their mathematical skills and solve real problems in mathematics and other subjects
  - making sure that pupils' basic mathematical skills are thoroughly mastered and practised throughout Key Stages 1 and 2.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by a highly regarded and effective headteacher ably supported by an equally determined and effective deputy headteacher and by other leaders throughout the school.
- Senior leaders and managers have a good understanding of where the strengths and areas for further improvement of the school lie. Areas to improve are clearly identified in a clear improvement plan together with appropriate actions.
- Middle leaders demonstrate effective management of their responsibilities. They clearly identify how actions for improvement have made an impact on teaching, which, in turn, has ensured that pupils make good progress.
- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching. They identify weaknesses and where it is necessary provide support through well-focussed training to help teachers further improve their skills. There is a rigorous process for managing teachers' performance, which is linked to the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. There are firm expectations of staff to meet required levels, which are linked to any pay award.
- The new curriculum meets pupils' different needs well and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. It includes many exciting opportunities for learning to take place across different subjects. Subject leaders are currently working to make even better links between subjects. However, in Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils do not have enough chances to practise their mathematical skills in a wide enough range of subjects.
- Pupils make a variety of visits to learn about different places and times; they have residential stays at an outdoor education centre and visit London. A wide range of visitors, including specialist coaches, successfully extend pupils' experiences through sport and music.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a keystone of this happy school. It is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and their care for each other. There are many opportunities to recognise and celebrate different religions and cultures both locally and in other countries. Links within the local community and with the parish are particularly strong.
- The pupil premium and primary school sport funding are carefully allocated to enhance learning and encourage physical activity. Leaders monitor how many pupils take part in sporting activities and pupils' developing performance. Teachers' skills in the teaching of physical education are enhanced by trained coaches.
- Leaders at all levels work hard to make sure that all pupils have the opportunity to reach their full potential in this welcoming and inclusive school. They ensure that all pupils are treated with the same care and respect at all times.
- The local authority has provided support that is appreciated by leaders, particularly in developing the provision in the early years.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is very supportive of the school. They are kept well-informed about all aspects of school life and regularly visit the school to gather more information. They bring a range of skills to their roles and are becoming more skilled at interpreting the wealth of information given to them, particularly in relation to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Governors are developing their ability to ask challenging questions so that they can better hold leaders to account, but their skills are not yet fully developed in this aspect. They are kept informed about how the pupil premium and sport funding are spent and understand how it is helping pupils. They have a good understanding of the performance of staff and how good performance is related to pay scales. Governors are rigorous in checking that all current safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good
- This is a happy and inclusive school where pupils are encouraged to be thoughtful and to care for each other. Pupils behave well both in classrooms and around the school. They try hard in lessons and are well focussed, particularly when the work interests them. Occasionally, when interest levels fall, the attention of some pupils wanders and they become restless.
- Pupils move about the school sensibly. They are extremely polite and well-mannered to adults and visitors

and are happy to talk about their school. They have a range of opportunities to take on roles of responsibility such as buddies, monitors and prefects. All Year 6 pupils are currently training to be sports leaders. Together, these opportunities create a sense of worth and increase pupils' self-esteem and confidence.

- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take, including cyber-bullying. They say that it is uncommon, but that if it occurred it would be dealt with quickly and this was confirmed when talking to parents.
- Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy coming to school and are determined to use every moment to the full.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good
- Pupils say that they enjoy their time in school and that they feel safe. If they have any worries or concerns they are confident that there is always someone to talk to and share their problems. Parents value the high level of care provided by the staff with which they have good relationships.
- Pupils recognise different dangers and are taught to be responsible and make sensible choices. They are aware of the hazards they might meet and how to deal with them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Pupils enjoy learning. They listen carefully and work hard to achieve what their teachers ask of them. They respond well to questions and carefully consider their answers.
- Pupils are keen to learn and respond to the challenges teachers regularly set for them. For example, pupils enjoyed having to think hard about how to add numbers written in Roman numerals. Working successfully together they teased out the problems and came up with effective solutions.
- Pupils enjoy writing and can adapt their writing styles to suit different audiences and purposes. They write at increasing length and greater accuracy as they move through the school. They have ample opportunities to use their skills in different subjects, for example, when writing about the First World War.
- Pupils are keen readers and read regularly both in school and at home. Older pupils talk about their favourite authors and regularly help younger pupils develop their reading skills and enjoyment of reading. Year 6 pupils efficiently run and manage the library and were happy to recommend a suitable book to an inspector.
- Teachers usually plan learning which captures the interest of pupils. Occasionally, where the work does not fire their imagination, the attention of some pupils wanders.
- At present, pupils' basic mathematical skills are not thoroughly mastered or practised consistently across Key Stages 1 and 2. As a result some pupils make simple mistakes when tackling problems. There are also not enough opportunities for pupils to apply and use their developing skills to solve real problems in mathematics lessons and other subjects.
- Pupils' work books are marked regularly. Teachers' comments let pupils know where they have been successful and give suggestions how they can make improvements. Pupils value these comments and act on them. Pupils are becoming increasingly proficient at judging the success of their own work and that of others.
- Teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils and are skilled at supporting the learning of pupils they work with. They work closely with teachers to provide additional help and support and contribute to the success of those with specific needs both within and outside of the classroom.
- The needs of the very small number of disadvantaged pupils are well understood and appropriate support is provided when required, for example, in small groups or individually. A group of volunteers regularly listens to pupils read and create a bank of reading material that matches the interests of the pupils.
- The most able pupils make similar good progress to others. Teachers recognise that they need appropriately challenging work and pupils respond to the high expectations that teachers have of them.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children achieve well in early years and continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. They reach

standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are increasingly above average by the end of Year 2.

- Over Key Stage 2, pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average. While standards are above average in mathematics, they are not as strong as in reading and writing. Nevertheless, achievement is good from pupils' starting points.
- Inspection evidence and school data for the current Year 6 pupils indicate that pupils are on track to make the progress expected of them, with a significant proportion on course to make more than expected progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. Pupils' secure early reading skills are successfully and systematically built on in Key Stage 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 national screening check for phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in 2014 was above average.
- Progress in writing is good, and sometimes better, across the school. The novel-based writing curriculum allows pupils to improve their writing skills systematically, and they use these skills to good effect to write imaginatively about what they have learnt and experienced.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, progress in mathematics, while good, is not as fast as in reading and writing. Some pupils continue to make simple mistakes in calculations because they have not securely mastered their basic mathematical skills. They also do not have enough opportunities to hone their skills in solving real-life problems in all subjects, including their mathematics lessons.
- The most able pupils achieve well. They are challenged by the harder work that they are given, and their teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve. As a result they are typically two terms ahead of others in the school by the end of Year 6.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good from their individual starting points. Their needs are accurately identified and met by appropriate help and support from skilled adults.
- In this school, the pupil premium funding is used well, when required, to support the very small number of disadvantaged pupils.

The early years provision is good

- The early years is well led by an effective manager who has worked hard and successfully with her team to improve the provision. Children are well-cared for throughout their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. There are very positive relationships between adults and children. Consequently, children settle in quickly and make a good start in becoming keen learners.
- Children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. Their progress is increasing throughout the early years as a result of the improvements to teaching and the learning areas which have been made in recent years. The majority of children are ready for learning in Year 1.
- Children make good progress. The very small number of disabled children and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others, and the most able make more rapid progress. This is because they benefit from good or better teaching. Adults place a strong focus on ensuring that children develop an enquiring mind. Children are given ample opportunities to find things out for themselves in all the areas of learning.
- Children become curious and determined learners and love to talk about what they are doing. During the inspection, the small teams of 'Number Heroes' showed real enthusiasm as they hunted for different shapes in the different parts of the school. They were eager to explain their secret mission to the inspector.
- The wide range of activities on offer are very carefully planned and so make a positive contribution to the children's well-being and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children are safe and secure in the early years because the staff work hard to make sure that children are safe at all times.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	108837
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	448365

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 of pupils on the school roll	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Oliver Keyes
Headteacher	Ann Blakey
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2010
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