

St John Boste Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108853
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	377831
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Wardle

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	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Millward
Headteacher	Geoff Laidler
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Wardle
Martin Pye

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 11 lessons, taught by seven teachers. They also made shorter visits to all classes to review the quality of work on display and observe individual pupils and groups at work. They listened to pupils read. Inspectors also scrutinised planning, talked to pupils and evaluated their work. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, and school leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as well as documents provided by the school, in planning the inspection. The documents included safeguarding records, the school development plan and school self-evaluation documents. The inspectors analysed survey responses from pupils and staff, as well as 90 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those learning English as an additional language is lower than average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. The school meets the government's current floor standard. The school has achieved Healthy School status and Eco-schools Green Flag Award. The school provides accommodation for St John Boste Kids Club, but this is managed privately and was not part of this inspection.

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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school where pupils achieve well. Pupils enjoy school and say that it is 'homely and friendly' and 'a place where the teachers care and help us make progress'. They benefit from an inclusive, caring ethos, which pervades the school community. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded through the inspection questionnaire endorse these positive views. The school is not outstanding because the progress made by pupils in writing is not as strong as that in reading and mathematics.
- Achievement is good. Attainment is well-above average by the end of Year 6 and pupils make good progress from their starting points. This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Children make a good start in Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils make good progress through the school, which accelerates in Years 5 and 6.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good and pupils learn well in lessons. When pupils work independently, they do so with enthusiasm. Teaching is not outstanding overall because opportunities for independent learning are not planned for as often as they could be. Assessment information is used extremely well in some lessons to ensure that activities take full account of the range of pupils' ability, although this is not always the case. Lessons are fun and engaging and support the outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
- Pupils behave well and are caring, considerate and courteous. They are kept safe and parents and carers recognise this, saying such things as 'My child feels safe in this warm, friendly environment.'
- The headteacher, together with members of the governing body, has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the school. Robust plans are in place to continue to improve the quality of teaching. Key to the school's success is the fact that it is a cohesive, focused, hard-working and well-led community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress in writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils develop their writing skills across a broad range of subjects
 - sharpening the analysis of pupil progress data to refine planning.
- Increase the percentage of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers make consistent and judicious use of assessment in lessons
 - sharing existing effective practice in marking so that this is consistent across the school
 - giving pupils more time and opportunities to exercise independence in their learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, rightly, regard their children as making good progress and lesson observations during the inspection confirm this. Pupils' attainment is well-above average in English and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6, although attainment and progress in mathematics and reading are stronger than that in writing.

Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills levels slightly above those typically found in children of their age. As a result of imaginative resourcing and well-planned activities, all children are fully involved in lessons, making choices and exploring the world around them. There are strong induction procedures and so children settle in quickly to life at school, ready to learn. They make good progress, so that they are well prepared for their work in Year 1.

Children enjoy reading and teachers place a high priority on developing reading skills. Pupils employ a variety of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words, including their knowledge of the sounds letters make. As a result, attainment in reading is above average by the end of Year 2. Pupils' progress in writing is good throughout the school, but it is often better in reading. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, although their attainment in reading and in English overall is well-above average, it is slightly lower in writing. Pupils' progress in mathematics is consistently good and their above-average attainment in Year 2 is sustained and built upon well to Year 6.

Careful provision and support in lessons, particularly from teaching assistants, ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable make good progress. In line with their peers, their learning and progress in all subjects accelerate in Years 5 and 6.

Quality of teaching

There are many strengths in the quality of teaching which is consistently good, with instances of outstanding practice. It is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire regard their children as being taught well and pupils say they enjoy lessons. Much of the reason for this is the variety built into the good curriculum, which engages pupils of all abilities. Pupils are clear which topics and themes set the context for exciting teaching. They showed delight when talking about different cultures, in particular the ancient Egyptians, and were animated when describing 'Africa week'. Opportunities to write at length in these contexts are not always available.

Teachers plan lessons very well to cater for the different needs and abilities of the pupils. They use a variety of activities in the classroom to engage the pupils and this leads to good progress. In one Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher enthused and challenged the pupils to work out percentages in the context of 'Sid's super sale', which resulted in high levels of excitement, concentration and learning. Lessons build upon prior learning well. Pace is good and questioning is used well to probe any misunderstanding. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils worked well collaboratively and responded positively to the teacher who valued their efforts. In this lesson, the teacher was very clear how quickly pupils were progressing and adjusted activities accordingly to stretch them even further. This strategy is not used consistently across the school, however. Marking helps pupils make progress, although it varies in quality.

Pupils show high levels of concentration in lessons and respond well to guidance. On occasions, however, teachers lead pupils through activities which could be completed slightly more independently, thereby creating an even higher level of challenge.

The development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in lessons and through enrichment programmes is outstanding. Pupils' responses to the inspirational Ash Wednesday reflections were mature and reflective. Engagement in sporting and cultural activities is widespread and includes a variety of musical opportunities, which many pupils benefit from, including harp lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour observed during the inspection was consistently good and sometimes outstanding. The school is orderly and calm. Pupils, parents and carers said that this was typical, although pupils reported some unkind behaviour, such as name calling. The pupils also said that, when this does occur, it is dealt with swiftly by adults. They respond well to the high standards set by the school in being polite and considerate of others and care for one another's needs. They know they should include others both in lessons and at playtime and the school council talked enthusiastically about the impact of 'play leaders', who ensure that no one is lonely at playtime. They have a keen understanding of the difference between right and wrong and are often given the opportunity to reflect upon their friendships, opinions, behaviour and beliefs.

In lessons, pupils are attentive and well behaved. When given the opportunity, they collaborate well in their learning and are highly independent, although there are occasions when this is not the case.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and say they feel very safe in school. They also have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including bullying based on prejudice, about which they have few concerns. They know that any incidents will be dealt with quickly and effectively by the school. As a result of enjoying school, pupils' attendance is above the national average and punctuality is good.

Leadership and management

Leaders, managers and members of the governing body are passionate about their school and have high expectations of both pupils and teachers. They communicate their vision effectively to all staff, who work as an excellent team. The governing body is fully involved in the school and supports and challenges the headteacher and staff to improve standards further. The governing body is instrumental in maintaining the ethos of the school. It ensures that pupils have excellent opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The headteacher places a good emphasis on professional development and respect and collaboration between all members of staff. The monitoring of teaching and learning is both effective and developmental. School self evaluation is good and improvement plans are focused, although the use of data about pupils' progress, particularly in writing, is not quite as effective as it might be. Consequently, while the quality of teaching is good and improving, it has a little way to go before it is outstanding overall.

Evaluation of the curriculum, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, has led to changes in outdoor provision and planning. As a result, children have access to good provision. The curriculum is good, but the focus on the development of writing across different subject areas has been correctly identified by school leaders as an area for further development. Equality of opportunity is high on the agenda, as evidenced in the inclusive nature of the school. The school takes any form of discrimination seriously and all pupils thrive in the school environment. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet requirements and the safety of the pupils has a high priority.

The school sees its partnership with parents and carers as central to its work. Parents and carers, overwhelmingly, agree that the school helps them to support their children with their learning. A variety of strategies are in place, including reading workshops for parents and carers to share strategies used in the classroom.

Since the last inspection, school self-evaluation and development planning have improved substantially and, as a result, the quality of teaching has improved. This, alongside the very clear, shared commitment to continued improvement, indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John Boste Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Washington, NE38 0HL

Thank you all very much for making my colleague and me feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, reading your questionnaires, looking at the work you do in lessons, and hearing some of you read. We think that your school is giving you a good education. There are many things that are good about your school. Here are some of them.

- The headteacher, the staff and the governing body are working hard to make sure that your school improves.
- Teachers plan your lessons so that they are interesting and give all of you the opportunity to make progress. You are taught well so you make good progress.
- The topics and themes that you cover are exciting and make you want to work hard in lessons.
- You behave well in lessons and around the school and you take good care of one another. Your attendance is good and you say you feel safe in school.
- Teachers give you excellent opportunities to reflect about your life and that of others, in particular, to think about spiritual aspects of life.
- Your school is a fun place to learn.

These are the things we have asked the school to make it even better.

- We have asked your teachers to help you improve your writing so that it is as good as your reading.
- We want you to be given more chances to work independently and to work things out by yourselves.

You can play your part in helping your school improve further by continuing to work hard, respect each other and by being guided by your teachers.

Yours sincerely
Michael Wardle
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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