

# St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Coundon

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114264
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	357506
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 September 2010–1 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Petts

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	128
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Anne Hall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Monica Connor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Victoria Lane Coundon, Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 8NN
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## **Introduction**

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited seven lessons and observed six class teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils, analysed 51 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The inspectors also looked at development plans, pupils' progress data, documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils, school policies and procedures, scrutinised pupils' current and past work and spoke to the School Improvement Partner.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following.

- The impact of teaching and learning on current achievement, rates and patterns of progress and the pupils' attainment.
- The success in Early Years Foundation Stage of exploiting the available provision, both indoors and outdoors.
- The extent to which senior leaders are developing the capacity to sustain improvements in progress rates to raise attainment.

## **Information about the school**

St Joseph's is a smaller than average primary school serving a former mining community. Almost all pupils are of a White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school is part of a national pilot scheme which enables all pupils to access a free school meal. About one third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities which is well above average. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is twice the national average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009 and the deputy headteacher was appointed at the start of the current academic year.

**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: how good is the school?**

2

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

2

## Main findings

St Joseph's is a good school. It is steadily improving and care and support provided are outstanding, ensuring that pupils' thrive in a happy, friendly atmosphere. Since her arrival, the headteacher has established a clear vision and ambition for sustained improvement. All staff are totally committed to this. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their support. The comments, 'Staff are doing a wonderful job and this is reflected in the pupils' positive attitudes' and 'The school has far exceeded my expectations, I am very, very happy' sums up their views.

Most children start school with skills below that typical for their age, often with weaknesses in their speech and language. They make good progress in reception despite the limited opportunities to discover things for themselves when outside. By the end of Year 6, attainment is average although it does vary year-on-year as a result of small cohorts. The school's data, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicate that attainment is rising. Pupils' achievement is good because teaching is never less than good and in some lessons it inspires and excites pupils to achieve highly. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the activities provided and make the fastest progress when there is variety and constant challenge and pace. In a few lessons, progress could be even faster if assessment information was used to ensure that tasks stretched the pupils a little more, and clear steps for improvement were consistently given to pupils. Pupils feel safe and show a good understanding of how to remain fit and healthy. They behave well, with some exemplary behaviour from older pupils. They show exceptional concern for each other's feelings and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. As one older pupil remarked, 'We don't do racism here'. They benefit extremely well from the many positive contributions they can make to the school and local community life. For example, visiting the nearby residential home where pupils' regularly entertain residents.

The decisive actions, taken as a result of the shrewd and sensitive leadership of the headteacher, are having a highly effective impact on the quality of teaching and learning. However, the impact is not yet fully reflected in the school's measurable outcomes. Rigorous systems to check and measure pupils' progress are in place and these accurately inform self-evaluation and planning. The many positive changes across the school are moving it forward. The school demonstrates a good capacity to sustain the improvements made.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the use of assessment information to further improve rates of progress, by:

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- matching work accurately and consistently to individual pupils' needs and interests to provide extra challenge
- always using what they know about pupils' progress to give them clear next steps guidance for improvement.
- Develop the range of outdoor learning activities in Early Years Foundation Stage in order to help advance children's development and boost their progress, by ensuring that:
  - more opportunities are provided for children to initiate their own learning, to explore and investigate the environment around them.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Pupils achieve well, enjoy their learning and make good progress as they move through school. Attainment in literacy and numeracy at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average but rising because of the varied opportunities to practise their skills. Thought provoking, creative approaches linking subjects together ensure that pupils become confident, independent learners. Pupils were seen to be thoroughly absorbed in their science lesson sorting food into different groups. However, there remains some scope to stretch pupils' thinking even more to strengthen the pattern of rising attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to English make the same good progress as their peers because they receive constructive and helpful individual support from staff.

Pupils are polite and friendly. Their excellent spiritual development is reflected in their care and concern for other people's feelings, such as when someone is accidentally hurt. Older pupils are especially considerate when playing with younger pupils. Good social, moral and cultural development enables them to flourish when given opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility, for example, taking decisions in school council meetings. They take each other's views and ideas seriously and know how to work as part of a team. All attend school regularly. Consequently, they all receive a good preparation for the future.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding because inventive approaches engage pupils' interest. This ensures that their knowledge and understanding is progressively advanced. In the best lessons, teachers use probing questions to make added demands of pupils. Assured use is made of new technology to 'bring learning to life' adding to the challenge and pace. Although activities are usually well matched to age, ability and needs not all opportunities are taken to provide extra challenge. Pupils' progress is carefully checked for any gaps in their learning or slips in their progress although not all opportunities are taken to make clear how work can be improved and teachers could make better use of assessment information.

The developing curriculum is well matched to the needs and interests of pupils. It is increasingly more interesting and relevant. Pupils enjoy the wide range of visits, visitors and after-school activities, all of which enrich the curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their team games and whole-school events, including their recent trip to the beach at South Shields.

The outstanding care, guidance and support are a clear strength of the work of the school. Parents and carers spoke highly of the approachable staff and the attention their children receive. Excellent support is provided during transition to secondary school settings. The robust monitoring systems ensure that pupils' pastoral needs are identified

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early and personalised intervention is quickly organised. Pupils from challenging circumstances, those potentially vulnerable and those new to learning English are extremely well cared for. Effective use is made of support agencies to ensure pupils receive all the expert help they need. This is also reflected in the pattern of above average attendance.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's successful leadership is ensuring the pace of school improvement is quickening. The talents of a committed team of staff are being shrewdly harnessed to introduce changes that are bringing about significant improvements in teaching and assessment. Rigorous progress checking, more inspiring teaching a strengthening curriculum and the effective use of external review have established a strong foundation for improvement. The improved systems for pupil assessment are starting to have an impact but are not yet consistent. As more activities are tailored to meet individual needs and interests, the rate of their progress is accelerating. The difficulties presented by an older building are being prioritised and successfully tackled, such as the relocation of the Reception class to provide a secure area outdoors.

The excellent range of opportunities in the school and the wider community enables pupils to develop personal skills successfully. Good links have been forged with local schools to enhance their learning and improve the outcomes for pupils. Relationships with parents and carers are good and strengthening as they are increasingly more involved in their children's learning. The governing body recognises the need to have greater rigour in its monitoring and are increasingly involved shaping the school's strategic direction. Safeguarding is satisfactory with all regulations and duties met. Staff practice reveals their clear understanding of procedures to keep risks to a minimum in order to protect children. The positive commitment to inclusion is reflected in the consistent pattern of pupils' achievement. Community cohesion is promoted well with a good range of experiences to broaden pupils' understanding of other beliefs and cultures.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children settle happily, quickly and confidently on arrival. Most enter with skills below that expected for their age, frequently with underdeveloped communication skills. All make good progress, especially in their personal development. Children respond positively to the high expectations, the testing questions and positive encouragement they receive. Attainment as children enter Year 1 varies depending on the ability of the cohort, but most are working towards the goals expected of them. Provision has recently been enhanced although the outdoor area is underdeveloped and provides limited opportunities for children to instigate their own learning. Regular, accurate assessment and well organised observations ensure that needs and interests are identified and enjoyable activities matched to meet them. For example, making available a collection of magnets so that children could experiment, pushing away or attracting magnets in turn. 'Bob the blending bug' provides children with opportunities to practise the use of sounds and letters to help speed up early reading and writing. Parents and carers are provided with good information to enable them to join in their children's learning. Despite the layout constraints of the classroom, staff manage welfare routines well. The good leadership and management display the vital energy and drive for continuous improvement.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## **Views of parents and carers**

Over a third of all parents and carers returned the questionnaire which expressed their views of the school. These views were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of what the school provides and all felt that their children are safe and happy in school. They speak highly of the school's welcoming atmosphere and the excellent care, guidance and support their children receive. The inspection entirely endorses these views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Coundon to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 128 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	59	20	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	67	17	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	45	26	51	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	47	26	51	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	65	18	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	43	27	53	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	51	25	49	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	57	16	31	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	47	26	51	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	59	21	41	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	49	25	49	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	53	23	45	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	61	20	39	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## **Common terminology used by inspectors**

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



4 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Coundon, Bishop Auckland, DL14 8NN**

I want to thank all of you for the very friendly welcome that you gave me when I visited your school. I found the time I spent talking to you, your teachers, your parents and other adults very enjoyable.

I was impressed by your good behaviour and your keenness to learn. The school provides a good and improving quality of education because you have an astute headteacher and excellent group of staff who know exactly what to do to make your lessons even better. They all take exceptional care of you. As a result, you clearly feel safe and enjoy very friendly and thoughtful relationships with each other and with your staff. It was clear you understand how to stay safe and healthy. You can be proud of your good progress and achievements as you move through the school.

It was clear from your remarks that you appreciate the way your staff make your learning fun and thought-provoking. Some excellent opportunities are provided for you to take on responsibilities both in school and in the local community. Your parents and carers told me just how highly they value the enjoyment you get from school and the ease with which your staff can be approached.

I have asked senior leaders to look at ways of making your work even more demanding to speed up the progress you make. This will help you to extend your skills. I have also asked that younger children are given the opportunity to find more things out for themselves when they learn outside. This will help you make faster progress as you grow and develop.

You can play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection. I hope your school will continue to improve.

I wish you all a bright future.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Petts

Lead Inspector

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