

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Norton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111684
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	363782
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Walker
Headteacher	Miss Mary Tate
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 30 lessons taught by 10 teachers and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. They 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. They also scrutinised the 115 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as 76 questionnaires from pupils and 29 questionnaires returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether teaching is consistently good across school so that all groups of pupils can become independent learners and make good progress.
- Whether outcomes for pupils are outstanding, in the light of what appears to be good achievement.
- Whether strategies introduced by the senior leadership team are successfully raising attainment and accelerating progress, for example, for girls in mathematics.

Information about the school

This school is an above-average sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark, Healthy School status and the Activemark.

The governing body manages extended provision in a daily before-school club called 'Early Birds'.

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

This is a good school. There are outstanding outcomes for pupils because, for example, they demonstrate good achievement, outstanding behaviour, an exceptional awareness of how to stay fit and healthy and make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community. All staff provide exceptionally sensitive care and support which ensure that pupils' well-being and personal development are promoted extremely well and pupils are happy and feel extremely safe. Outstanding procedures involve parents and carers in their children's learning, so that progress is enhanced through support at home. Pupils have an exceptionally strong sense of how to help others, an advanced understanding of other faiths and a highly-developed awareness of life in different cultures. This understanding, together with the school's outstanding promotion of community cohesion and development of pupils' interest in the wider world, ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding. Pupils have a clear understanding of the world of work and highly confident skills in team work and information and communication technology (ICT). Allied to above-average attainment and attendance, this ensures that pupils' preparation for their future education is outstanding.

Pupils make good progress. This is because of mostly good teaching, which makes learning fun and an effective curriculum that offers many interesting experiences. Outstanding partnerships enhance pupils' understanding of enterprise, music and writing skills. In less effective lessons, teachers offer too much information, do not ask sufficiently challenging questions and give too few opportunities for pupils to cooperatively or independently engage in open-ended, investigative activities. This is especially the case in mathematics. Assessment is used increasingly well to identify the learning needs of individual pupils and to measure their progress. At times, however, it is used less effectively to plan work that is matched to individual needs and, when this occurs, the pace of learning drops because work is not sufficiently challenging. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the extremely clearly-focused support and challenge they receive in lessons.

Self-evaluation is largely accurate and includes all staff and the governing body, that offers outstanding support and challenge to the school, in planning and monitoring. Given its track record, improvements in writing and the Early Years Foundation Stage, the good quality of provision and outstanding outcomes for pupils, the school's capacity to improve is good, and it provides outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer term of 2012, further accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment, by:

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- improving the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to explore for themselves in investigative and open-ended activities, independently or together, especially in mathematics
- ensuring teachers use questions more effectively so that pupils are encouraged to extend their thinking
- ensuring that data are well used so that work is consistently well matched to the needs of individual pupils and offers appropriate challenge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Achievement is good and pupils enjoy their learning. They are extremely courteous, form highly positive relationships and have excellent attitudes towards their work. They especially enjoy the many challenging and lively activities provided in lessons, such as projects linked to residential visits, or using their exceptional singing to further their understanding in religious education. They enjoy using ICT, for example, in analysing data and presenting their findings and in employing the interactive whiteboard for planning and writing stories and playing games designed to develop their reading skills.

Children have a wide range of ability when they start school but overall their skills on entry are in line with those expected for their age. Pupils make good progress to attain standards which are consistently above average by the end of Year 6. Typically, boys attain more highly than girls in mathematics in Year 2. In Year 6, while boys attain more highly than boys nationally in English, their attainment is lower than girls. The school has identified these differences and has introduced appropriate strategies to close the gender gap.

Pupils care for one another exceptionally well, have huge respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel extremely safe. Pupils are confident that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern. They are exceptionally aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise and are ambassadors for healthy living in the local schools' partnership. This understanding is reflected in the high take-up of healthy school meals and their very enthusiastic involvement in physical education, sport and after-school clubs. Pupils make an exceptionally positive contribution to the school community through the democratically-elected school council, by leading assemblies and acting as playground helpers and play leaders. These groups meet regularly and play a major role in helping pupils to feel very safe, behave exceptionally well and enjoy their learning. They support a range of charities and participate in competitions with other local schools, in activities with the local church and in music festivals.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ 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?

Teachers make learning fun. They employ interactive whiteboard technology well to engage pupils and plan opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, research, games and using ICT. Teachers make pupils very clear about the purpose of the lessons and encourage pupils to evaluate how well they have progressed towards understanding the lesson objectives. Teachers use questions well to check that pupils have made progress. They use questions less successfully to encourage pupils to develop their ideas. Occasionally, the pace of learning drops because teachers offer too much information and pupils are prevented from getting on with challenging and open-ended tasks, independently or together, especially in mathematics. Marking is used effectively to tell pupils how well they have achieved in individual tasks and to ensure they are clear about how to improve their work.

The curriculum contributes to pupils' good progress by offering many interesting activities which help them to see the links between subjects and develop and apply important skills. For example, work on the Second World War successfully develops imagination, research and writing skills. There are good procedures to promote good progress in reading and writing. There are well-planned enrichment activities, including visits to mosques and synagogues, the Saltholme nature reserve and Beamish Museum. Allied to opportunities to work with local professionals, they help to develop pupils' skills in science, art and history and their outstanding understanding and tolerance of other faiths and cultures. There are

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many popular extra-curricular clubs which promote learning and enjoyment in sporting, arts and environmental activities, including art club, choir and brass band and the development of the school garden.

Pupils are cared for exceptionally well in accordance with the school's Catholic values, so that their varied learning needs are very well met and they develop self-esteem, respect and a sense of responsibility. The welfare of pupils is given a high priority, for example, by providing the 'Early Birds' club which gives some pupils a good start to the day. There are extremely successful strategies to help those pupils who may be falling behind in their learning, pupils who are looked-after and those with specific learning needs. The school works successfully to encourage pupils to attend regularly. However, attendance is affected by some families taking holidays during term-time. Well-established and highly effective practices prepare parents and carers for the start of school life when children join the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good transition arrangements ease the movement of pupils as they move from class to class and when they transfer to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The experienced and respected headteacher has rigorously pursued and implemented strategies that have brought about improvements in the school's effectiveness, especially in writing and outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, she has established new systems for tracking progress and monitoring the effectiveness of teaching. These have yet to fully impact on raising attainment to the high level to which the school aspires. The governing body offers outstanding support and challenge, is exceptionally closely involved in the life of the school and has developed highly effective procedures to monitor learning and progress. All staff, including a good and developing leadership team, have clearly-defined roles and responsibilities. They are enthusiastic about their contribution to the development of key areas of the curriculum and raising attainment. They welcome opportunities to contribute to decision-making and the very detailed school improvement plan and are keen to advance their professional development.

The procedures for safeguarding pupils are organised to the highest possible levels. All the required checks are carried out quickly and thoroughly and procedures for child protection are rigorous. The school has exceptionally effective links with outside agencies to support the pupils' wide ranging needs and to develop learning opportunities. There is a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities and to ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. For example, the school has acted on its careful analysis

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of data to ensure that girls' attainment in mathematics has been raised. The school listens very carefully to the requests of parents and carers and has introduced regular meetings to encourage the support for their children's learning at home. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. The sense of unity in the school is extremely strong and there are excellent links with the neighborhood. Pupils have a highly developed understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures within the United Kingdom and of life in other countries.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Effective teaching, by all adults, is skilfully directed to develop skills in counting, speaking and listening and linking sounds and letters, and helps children to make good progress from their starting points. There is a strong focus on offering children opportunities to develop their early writing skills. All staff offer excellent care and provide children with many stimulating activities both indoors and outdoors. Accordingly, children respond by becoming extremely caring and confident individuals and they flourish when engaged in creative activities, such as construction and imaginative play. They particularly enjoy investigating the plants in their garden, designing tee-shirts to promote safety in the sun and using ICT to explore directions. Occasionally, there is too much direction from teachers and opportunities are missed for children to choose their own activities. Some whole-class interventions go on for too long and are not always focused clearly on the needs of individual children.

A range of healthy snacks and drinking water, opportunities for exercise and clear guidelines for hand washing, help children to develop an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Staff ensure that requirements for children's safety are rigorously met. Good leadership and management include effective procedures for planning and

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assessment. The staff team share the same vision and this supports a climate of continued improvement. Highly effective partnerships with parents and carers enable children to settle quickly into the Nursery class and allow parents and carers to understand how well their children are progressing, especially through the children's learning journals.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Approximately one third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. This is a broadly average response rate. The respondents support the school and its leaders extremely strongly with almost all being happy with their child's experience at school and all aspects of its work. The inspection findings endorse these very positive views. A few parents and carers do not believe the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection looked in detail at this area. The school points to evidence that evenings to inform parents and carers about the curriculum are instigated at the request of parents and carers.

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, Norton 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 inspection team received 115 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 320 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	60	44	34	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	94	73	34	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	69	53	52	40	5	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	54	54	42	4	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	83	64	41	32	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	73	57	49	38	5	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	50	57	44	6	5	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)	58	45	64	50	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	74	57	46	36	7	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	61	47	58	45	5	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	41	60	47	12	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	62	48	59	46	7	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	65	39	30	5	4	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



20 May 2011

Dear Pupils,

**Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 1HR**

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making us so welcome and talking to us so politely and enthusiastically when we inspected your school.

You go to a good school and your teachers know how to make it even better. The team was impressed by the quality of the school council and the effort you put into your work. We were particularly impressed by your beautiful singing. Your behaviour, politeness and the exceptional care and respect you have for one another are admirable. Your teachers take excellent care of you, try to make your lessons fun and help you to know how to improve your work. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and appreciate the activities the school provides for you, such as visits and clubs. Your parents and carers like the school very much. We have asked your school to improve teaching and to help you make even better progress by:

- helping you reach higher standards at the end of Year 6, by providing more opportunities for you to investigate together and solve problems, especially in mathematics
- asking questions that challenge you to develop and extend your ideas
- making sure that all the information that teachers have about how well you are doing is used to plan work that is at the right level for all of you.

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

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Potter

Lead Inspector

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