

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

Coast Road, Blackhall Colliery, County Durham, TS27 4HE

## Inspection dates

13 December 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress. Their attainment is average at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good. Work is well planned with interesting activities which help pupils enjoy learning. As a result, they make rapid progress in reading and writing.
- The curriculum offers pupils exciting learning activities, chances to be creative and to follow their own interests. It helps pupils see how subjects link together and offers opportunities for writing in other subjects and about real-life experiences.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is a strength.
- The headteacher has a detailed view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a clear understanding of how to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement.
- She is well supported and challenged by the governing body. Together, they have taken decisive action to tackle weak teaching. As a result, teaching and pupils' achievement have improved.
- Pupils' behaviour is good; they say they feel very safe. They play a large part in helping all pupils to play well together and in suggesting improvements to the school. Attendance is above average.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school does not make enough use of information about progress to set work that is hard enough for all pupils, especially in mathematics, and to form a full view of progress in different classes.
- While there is good teaching of mathematics, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their mathematical skills in real-life problem-solving activities. As a result, there is slower progress in mathematics than in English.
- Target-setting does not tell pupils clearly how to take the next steps in their learning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors had meetings with staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and one parent governor, and with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school's improvement plan; the school's data relating to pupils' progress; monitoring reports; the work pupils were doing in their books; and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in four lessons taught by three teachers and listened to a group of pupils read. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons.
- The headteacher conducted one joint observation of lessons with the inspectors. The inspectors also observed the headteacher reporting back to the teacher on the findings regarding the quality of learning and pupils' achievement in lessons.
- The inspectors met some parents informally at the start of the school day. They took into account the four responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and those in the school's own survey of parents.
- Ten staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

## Inspection team

Gordon Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Pattinson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are well-above average.
- There is a breakfast club and many after-school clubs which are managed by the governing body and run voluntarily by staff.
- The schools meet the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2011. She is currently seconded from a local school where she is also headteacher on a 0.5 basis. There are plans to make this shared arrangement permanent in the near future.
- There are three classes for pupils in Reception and Year 1; Years 2 and 3; Years 4, 5 and 6.
- The school is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding, to further raise attainment and rates of pupils' progress, especially in mathematics, by:
  - offering more opportunities for pupils to improve their mathematics skills by practising them in a wider range of mathematical areas and in real-life problem-solving activities
  - using the school's information about how well pupils are working to set tasks which are hard enough for all pupils
  - improving target-setting so that pupils are aware of the level of their work and know clearly how their targets can help them take the next steps in their learning
  - making better use of the school's information about how well pupils are working so that leaders can accurately measure pupils' progress in different classes and set targets for teachers and pupils to ensure even faster progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The abilities of different year groups vary in this small school. Most children start school with skills that are below those typically expected for their age. As a result of improvements in provision and the quality of teaching, children now do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. They make good progress regardless of their starting points.
- However, attainment at the end of Year 2 fluctuates. For example, over the past two years it has been both well-below and well-above average, dependent on the different proportions of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs within the group. At the end of Year 6 attainment is typically average, with an increasing proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels.
- Leaders have acted decisively to improve the quality of teaching. Improvements in teaching across the school ensure that progress is faster than in previous years and is now consistently good, although it is slower in mathematics. These improvements have not yet had time to raise attainment at the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs attain higher standards than similar pupils across the country and make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium attain standards at the end of Year 2 which are below similar pupils across the country. At the end of Year 6 they attain standards which are in line with similar pupils across the country and the gap in achievement is closing between them and all pupils.
- Inspection evidence shows that progress in reading is good. This is a result of good teaching of how to link sounds and letters to help pupils read words they are not used to, and a drive to help pupils enjoy books and read more in school and at home.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers make clear to pupils what they are to learn and give clear explanations that help pupils to understand. They ask questions which encourage pupils to explain their ideas, and use their answers to reshape work during lessons. Teachers make lessons interesting and pupils learn quickly. In all lessons, teaching assistants support less-able pupils highly effectively so that they are helped to learn rapidly.
- Highly effective teaching in one lesson in Reception and Year 1 helped all pupils make rapid progress in their mathematical skills. The teacher planned work that stretched all pupils, asked questions that were very well targeted at individuals and used exciting activities, including information and communication technology, to make sure pupils were thoroughly involved in their learning.
- A clear and successful strategy, which has improved pupils' writing, is to allow pupils to act out scenes and pretend to be characters from books. For example, good teaching in the Years 2 and 3 class ensured pupils were excited by pretending to be characters in the Cinderella story so they could find out about Cinderella's feelings. This gave them clear ideas to write about and they made good progress. Indeed, there are many well-planned opportunities for pupils to write stories, about work in other subjects or visits they have made.
- The curriculum and teaching in mathematics offer too much work on number and calculation and too few opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematics skills in real-life, problem-solving activities that have more than one solution. Occasionally, pupils spend too much time practising what they already know, rather than moving on quickly to new learning.
- For example, good teaching in the Year 4, 5 and 6 class helped the most-able pupils to understand a new and more difficult way to multiply numbers. The teacher gave a distinct step-by-step explanation which made the learning extremely clear so that pupils were able to understand and do the calculations quickly and accurately. However, before doing this, the class

had spent too much time checking old learning.

- While there are many good examples of teachers making sure that work set is at the right level, they do not always use information about pupils' skills and abilities to plan work well enough to get the best out of all pupils.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked and this marking helpfully tells pupils how successful they have been in their work and how to improve it. Teachers give pupils time to act upon any advice they give. While targets are set to help pupils know what they should learn over a number of weeks, they are not clearly linked to the level of pupils' work, do not adopt a step-by-step approach and take too long to achieve.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils are happy in school and enjoy their lessons because they are excited by their learning. They respect one another, work and play well together and are very polite to adults. They are very keen to talk about their school and the many visits and visitors they have. They are eager to show their work and are proud of their excellent acting, art and singing.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good in their lessons and any minor misbehaviour is quickly dealt with by their teachers. Indeed, much excellent behaviour was evident in lessons observed during the inspection as well as around the school.
- Inspectors analysed the school's records of behaviour which showed that behaviour has improved significantly in the past two years. This is as a result of the successful use of clear expectations, a clear and consistent system of rewards and sanctions and the pupils' own clear understanding of how to behave well. As a result, exclusions have been used appropriately and there have been none this year. The school's involvement in the UNICEF Rights Respecting School initiative has also had a strong effect on improving pupils' behaviour within a short time.
- Pupils feel very safe and they are aware of different forms of bullying. They say that any form of bullying, including racist- and cyber-bullying, is rare and when it does happen they are confident that it will be quickly dealt with. They know that older pupils, as well as the teachers and other adults in school, will help with any problems.
- Playground buddies help pupils to play safely and enjoyably together and pupils also develop social skills in the breakfast and after-school clubs. Pupils say that the school council listens to their concerns and ideas. They discuss school rules with teachers and members talk to school leaders on safety issues that worry pupils. The council has helped to plan and raise funds to improve the playground and the school toilets.
- Attendance is above average. It has improved as a result of actions by the school to encourage pupils to attend. It has also improved because pupils are excited by their lessons and so they love coming to school.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher has had a significant impact on improving the school in a short time. She has shown determination to tackle the poor behaviour of a few pupils and to eliminate weak teaching. Along with a distinct understanding of how to improve teaching and regular and rigorous observations of lessons, this has had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and is helping pupils to make faster progress.
- The headteacher gives clear advice about how teachers can improve and this advice is carefully linked to training programmes which help teachers to sharpen their skills. Teachers greatly appreciate the way the headteacher supports, advises and encourages them. As a result, all teachers are determined to make the school even better and willingly accept opportunities to develop the school further.

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- The headteacher has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses, has developed high expectations among all staff and strengthened the staff team. The deputy headteacher is very clear about her responsibilities when the headteacher is working in her other school and there is regular and purposeful communication between them.
  - They know what needs to be done to make the school better and have highly developed skills in planning improvements and checking that they are successful. The school's view about its own performance is, therefore, accurate and offers clear and appropriate areas for development.
  - Performance management of staff is clearly focused on raising attainment and improving the quality of teaching. Staff are clear that they will only be rewarded when their pupils have done as well as they should have done. However, information about pupils' progress is not used well enough to provide leaders with a clear understanding of how much progress pupils are making in different classes. As a result, leaders do not set targets for teachers and pupils which are checked regularly enough to ensure pupils' progress becomes even more rapid.
  - Funding has been used well to improve the basic skills of those pupils eligible for the pupil premium. The gap in achievement between them and all pupils across the country is closing. This shows the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.
  - At its best, the curriculum catches pupils' interest because it is based upon pupils' own interests. There are many opportunities across school which help pupils to see the links which can be made in learning in different subjects. In addition, there are numerous chances for pupils to develop their spiritual and cultural awareness, and to appreciate local history through, for example, exploring the town's mining heritage.
  - The local authority has provided successful support in legal and personnel matters. It has also provided advice on how to improve the teaching of mathematics and English and promote developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Such advice has helped to improve teaching and pupils' progress.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body has clear procedures to hold the school to account. Those governors who are new to the role, including the new Chair of the Governing Body, are extremely committed and have undertaken training so that they are very aware of how to improve the school. They carry out routine assessments of the overall provision, including how the pupil premium funding is helping pupils to achieve better. This gives them a very clear view of the strengths and weaknesses. They are very involved in the life of the school, helping pupils in their learning and monitoring teaching and areas of the curriculum. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. All staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. The governing body has distinct procedures to check on pupils' achievement and on the budget. As a result, it has effectively removed a deficit. With the headteacher, they have taken decisive action to tackle weak teaching and establish a core of good teachers, whose performance is clearly assessed and whose training needs are effectively met. As a result, there have been improvements in teaching and leadership and in pupils' progress and behaviour in the past two years.
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## 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114280
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	403236

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

<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>	77
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nicola Park
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marie-Louise Binks
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 March 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5864308
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5864308
<b>Email address</b>	p3506.admin@durhamlearning.net



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