

# St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mill Lane, Gilesgate, Durham, DH1 2JQ

**Inspection dates** 24–25 September 2013

<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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The drive, passion and ambition of the headteacher are shared by all staff and ensures year-on-year improvement.
- The good and occasionally inspiring teaching enables pupils of all ages, including the most able, to make good progress and achieve well in English and mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those supported by extra funding, achieve as well as their classmates, because they are given exactly the right kind of help and guidance in lessons.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and their great eagerness to learn make an extremely positive impact on their rate of progress and achievement in lessons.
- Pupils feel safe and happy. Their enjoyment is evident in their above average attendance.
- Reception children make speedy progress developing their personal skills, which helps prepare them well for Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils' learning is enhanced by a rich variety of memorable experiences, including visits and visitors. This helps build on their desire and hunger to learn.
- The exceptionally high quality of care and support ensures that the needs of each pupil are extremely well understood by staff.
- The strong governing body have an accurate grasp of the school's performance and know exactly what needs to be done to achieve their high aspirations.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally teaching does not fully challenge pupils to further stretch their thinking, particularly when analysing and solving problems.
- Teachers do not always relentlessly check and test pupils' understanding and offer opportunities to practise essential skills in English and mathematics.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons including four paired observations and paired work scrutiny with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons, and walks around the school to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, parents, seven members of the governing body, school staff, including those with responsibilities for subjects, and the local authority educational development partner.
- The inspector took account of the 25 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the work of the school and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons, pupils' books and school improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour, racist incidents, complaints and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also taken into consideration.

## Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Joseph's is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is almost twice the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is close to twice the national average.
- Currently, a well above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and children from service families.
- Most pupils are from White British communities with a few pupils from minority ethnic groups. A few speak English as an additional language. A much higher than average and increasing proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club each morning.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
  - sharing imaginative, thought-provoking methods more widely in the school
  - providing even more opportunities for pupils to think critically, solve problems and fully explain their ideas
  - using the rich range of first-hand learning experiences to maximise opportunities for pupils to practise their English and mathematical skills
  - questioning pupils closely to check the detail of how much they have understood.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- When children start in the Reception class their skills and knowledge are well below those typical for their age. They settle confidently and speedily in the happy, caring and supportive atmosphere. Good teaching and highly effective classroom support, ensure that children make good progress in developing their speaking, listening and early reading, writing and number skills.
- The good teaching of letter and sound relationships continues in Key Stage 1, where pupils exceed the national average in their Year 1 phonics test. Attainment at the end of Year 2, although below average overall, is improving, especially in pupils' reading and writing. This is because of the positive action taken since the previous inspection to improve reading, writing and calculation skills.
- Good and increasingly rapid progress in Years 3 to 6, ensures all pupils reach the attainment levels expected of them in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. A significant and rising proportion do better than this. Despite the current pattern of good achievement with pupils reaching at least the levels expected of them, attainment can fluctuate. This is because cohorts do vary considerable in their size and composition. In addition, the attainment levels of those pupils joining part way through the key stage can also vary greatly at the point of arrival.
- Occasionally, opportunities are missed to demand even more of pupils' thinking, such as in their creative and imaginative writing. Pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as their classmates, because their needs are quickly and accurately pinpointed and well understood by staff. This is evident in the high expectations set for them in lesson planning.
- Pupils enjoy reading and younger pupils make good and sometimes rapid progress sounding out unfamiliar words confidently, accurately and fluently. Skills are broadly typical for their age. Many older pupils are avid readers who talk animatedly about their favourite authors and themes. Overall, skills are at least average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to add to the richness and vitality of the learning of those known to be eligible, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. Gaps identified in reading, writing and calculating are being systematically closed as pupils move through the school. School information and inspection evidence reveals that current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain at least as well in English and mathematics as their peers.
- Energy and enjoyment are added to lessons by linking subjects together in thought-provoking ways. For example, reading the novel, 'Street Child', enables pupils to live the experience of a young orphan, who runs away from a Victorian workhouse. In spite of this, the interesting learning experiences are not always fully maximised to practise essential skills in all subjects.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good with elements of exciting and thought-provoking practice. Previous weaknesses in teaching, particularly in the quality of the teaching of writing have been eliminated. Nevertheless, occasionally lessons can lack that extra challenge to ensure a pattern of rapid progress.
- Relationships between staff and pupils in lessons are excellent. Staff work diligently to ensure pupils work hard and can thrive in the positive classroom atmosphere. Consequently, classrooms are happy, busy, well-ordered and calm. Marking is helpful and constructive and written comments make it clear how pupils can improve.
- In the best lessons when progress is fastest teachers:
  - ensure that tasks are closely matched to individual age, ability and needs
  - use subject knowledge to teach pupils how to work things out for themselves and draw accurate conclusions

- use questioning skilfully to stretch and test pupils' knowledge and understanding
- make sure support staff intervention and support is precisely targeted.
- In those lessons where teaching is less consistently challenging:
  - methods adopted do not always draw out pupils' thinking sufficiently
  - teachers do not always spark additional interest and excitement and ensure that pupils think for themselves
  - questioning does not relentlessly add to the challenge to pupils' thinking and test their understanding.
- Teaching assistants are skilful adopting effective methods to help pupils catch-up. This includes the valuable work addressing the complex needs of a small group of often anxious pupils. Excellent use is made of specialist support, such as speech therapists, to quicken pupils' progress acquiring proficiency in crucial skills, such as reading, writing and calculating.
- In the Reception class, children are provided with excellent opportunities to develop confidence, independence and self-control. This ensures they are self-assured exploring and finding things out for themselves.

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

- The excellent staff role models, high expectations and the exceptional care they receive makes sure all pupils feel happy and secure. Pupils are very aware of the boundaries for their conduct. Their exemplary behaviour is characterised by their considerate, friendly and caring attitudes.
- The breakfast club sets a very positive tone to the start of the day. In lessons, the high levels of mutual respect between staff and pupils are striking. Whether working as a whole class, with a partner or independently, pupils are keen to learn and display high levels of commitment and concentration in lessons. All parents indicate that their children are happy and safe and that the school makes certain they are well behaved.
- Conversations with pupils demonstrate that they are well informed about the different forms of bullying. This includes by text, use of the internet and verbal and physical pressures. Pupils are confident that if incidents were to occur staff would be deal with them speedily and firmly. The checking of school records shows that inappropriate behaviour at any time is very infrequent.
- The school has taken decisive and effective action to improve attendance. This includes providing highly successful support for potentially vulnerable pupils. Effective routines are in place to manage attendance. Consequently, attendance is above average and punctuality excellent.

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

- The headteacher, ably supported by an insightful deputy headteacher, provides a clear direction for continuous school improvement. They respond positively to local authority quality checks. As a result, the quality of teaching is continually strengthened, accelerating the pace of pupils' progress and boosting their achievement.
- The staff are a closely-knit team, who are accomplished and talented. Those with subject responsibilities are continually broadening their experience and expertise, adding to the momentum of improvement. Teaching is well led and managed. Carefully thought out staff training programmes, including sharing the expertise of partner schools and local authority know-how, underpin action for improvement. Staff performance is carefully monitored with improvement targets closely matched to incentives and rewards.
- The robust checking of the school's performance ensures senior leaders have an accurate grasp of school strengths. Correct priorities for improvement are identified, although planning does not always focus on relentlessly raising achievement even further.
- The stimulating curriculum provides a variety of motivating experiences for pupils, for example, when steering a cruiser, under supervision, along the River Tyne. Pupils' personal development

is exceptionally well catered for and is underpinned by their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Experiences include a residential visit for older pupils. Effective use is made of primary school sport funding to employ a local provider to add to the variety of activities, boost participation and enhance pupils' performance.

- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much best practice underpinning the high quality of care and support provided for pupils. For example, child-protection procedures are of an excellent quality.
- The school works tirelessly to ensure each pupil has an equal chance to enjoy their learning and achieve success. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The highly effective governing body is shrewdly led. Its members play a key role shaping the direction of the school and display an accurate grasp of school performance. They are active in school and provide challenge and support in equal measure. They ensure that the management of teachers' performance is effective. Their regular training and briefings are put to valuable use analysing school information. This includes gaining an accurate view of performance, taking into account of the impact of those pupils leaving and joining at other than the normal time. The governing body makes certain that pupil premium funding closes gaps in pupils' performance.

## 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>	114273
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	411891

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>	123
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pat Conway
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Boyle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 July 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 386 5611
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