

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

Whinfield Way, Highfield, Tyne and Wear, NE39 2JE

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Children settle quickly and get a good start to their education. They enter with skills that are mainly typical for their age and make good progress because of the good teaching they receive from skilful staff.
- Pupils continue to make good and sometimes outstanding progress across the school. They leave Year 6 with standards that are above average and sometimes well above average overall.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Questions and planning are used effectively to promote pupils' learning and progress.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with a range of needs. Consequently, pupils who are disabled or have a special educational need and those eligible for the pupil premium make good progress.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences support pupils' personal development well. Pupils behave well both in and out of lessons. They very much enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and feel safe in school.
- The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have rapidly identified the key areas for improvement. They have rigorously checked on teaching and it is already showing signs of further improvement. A cohesive and willing staff are keen for the school to improve further.
- Governors support and challenge the school strongly, and rigorously check on how well the school is performing. Funding is used effectively to support pupils' learning and progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Insufficient teaching is outstanding. Marking does not always improve the standards of pupils' work or improve their progress. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to check on their own learning so they can accelerate their own progress.
- Progress in writing across Key Stage 2 is not yet good enough. Pupils' grammatical skills are not sufficiently well developed and weaker skills in handwriting impede pupils' progress. Pupils' reading skills are not utilised successfully enough to improve their writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed groups of pupils working with teaching assistants and listened to some pupils read from different year groups in classes, including some from Year 2.
- The inspector talked to a range of pupils, including some from the school council, about their work and play in the school. He also looked at a range of pupils' work from across the school.
- Meetings were held with six governors as well as teaching staff, including senior and middle leaders. Discussions were held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 44 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). He also considered the school's staff questionnaires. Two parents contacted the inspector to give their views about the school and one parent wrote a letter.
- The inspector observed the overall work of the school and looked at a number of documents including the school's data about pupils' current progress. He also studied documents relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector examined a range of other evidence including school displays, its website, and evidence representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

David Shearsmith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- A well-below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A below average proportion of pupils are supported at school action. An average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has achieved the Eco Bronze award and International Dimension awards.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is currently taught in one class, which includes Reception-age and Year 1 pupils.
- The school is housed in a new purpose-built school building which it shares with Highfield Community Primary School.
- The school has out-of-school provision which is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted. The report is available on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - improving the quality of marking, so pupils are given clear points for improvement and time to correct their work in the next lesson
 - ensuring pupils know how to be successful in lessons and have opportunities to check on and accelerate their own learning and progress.
- Improve progress in writing across Key Stage 2 by:
 - improving pupils' handwriting and presentation skills so they become more efficient in their writing
 - utilising pupils' strong reading skills to improve the quality of their writing
 - improving pupils' grammatical skills so they can write more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school with skills that are typical for their age. There are growing proportions that enter with lower literacy skills than would be expected, as they come from a variety of different nurseries. Children make good progress across the Reception class as they have access to good quality teaching and resources inside the classroom. Outdoor learning is good. The staff are very skilful at using the area, even though the school is not as well resourced in the outdoor learning area.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Key Stage 1. They reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are above and sometimes well above the national average. Overall, pupils continue to make good and sometimes outstanding progress across Key Stage 2 to reach standards that are above, and sometimes well above, the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- However, progress is more variable at Key Stage 2. Progress in mathematics has been weaker in the past but is now improving. School data show that progress in writing at Key Stage 2 is relatively weaker. This is due to weaker handwriting and grammatical skills that impede pupils from improving the quality of their work. The school does not show pupils how to apply their very good reading skills to improve their skills in writing.
- A strong, systematic approach to teaching phonics (sounds that letters make) ensures that pupils get a good start to reading. Pupils performed above and well above the national average in the Year 1 phonics tests. Reading is a particular strength in the school with pupils reaching high standards at both key stages.
- Pupils make good progress in their skills in mathematics. They reach standards that are often above and sometimes well above average. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan mathematics lessons well. This usually ensures pupils make good and sometimes better progress.
- Teachers challenge pupils well in most lessons. Consequently, the most-able pupils make good progress overall. They reach standards that are above and sometimes well above average by the time they leave in Year 6.
- Funding is used well by the school so that pupils known to be entitled to the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress. By the time they leave in Year 6, they are almost two terms ahead of similar pupils nationally. Attainment is well above average and almost in line with their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, the school enables all pupils to have an equality of opportunity to achieve as well as their peers.
- Skilful teaching assistants and good quality teaching ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress across the school. They currently reach standards that are above average for similar pupils nationally, in reading, writing and mathematics, by the time they leave in Year 6.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage children are highly engaged in learning. They thrive and make good progress as they settle into learning quickly. There is a strong focus on personal development and developing the children's speaking and listening skills. During small group, teacher-led activities, children make good and sometimes outstanding progress as staff know their children well and provide tasks that meet their needs. Year 1 pupils are also appropriately challenged to ensure they achieve well. Staff provide excellent activities when pupils are playing and interact with them well so that their learning is further enriched.
- Teaching is typically good and improving over time. In a Year 4/5 class, pupils were challenged

to write a piece of persuasive writing. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and very well-planned lesson ensured that pupils made outstanding progress. He skilfully modelled how to write a piece of persuasive writing. He then gave pupils a very clear understanding of how to be successful. Consequently, they were able to check how well they had written. Pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding of grammar and produced very high quality pieces of writing. This is not so in all lessons as teachers do not consistently or effectively explain to pupils how to be successful in their learning.

- In a Year1/2 lesson, the teacher very effectively met pupils' needs as the lesson was well planned. Pupils wrote instructions for making a sandwich. They made good progress in their learning because the teacher carefully modelled the writing and provided independent work that ensured all pupils could achieve well. Although pupils were given some pointers on how to be successful, these were not sufficient enough to enable pupils to check on their own learning and progress.
- Teachers mark pupils work regularly and use the school's systematic approach to marking. However, marking does not enable pupils to reach the next level in their work or sufficiently accelerate their progress. They are not given clear enough points for improvement or time to improve in the next lesson. Thus marking is not always effective in improving pupils' work and ensuring better progress.
- Support staff and teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' progress both in and out of the classroom. They work with pupils having a range of needs, as well as supporting phonics teaching for the younger pupils in the school. During teacher-led activities they skilfully support pupils and assist those working on independent learning tasks.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils very much enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above average. The school has good systems in place to ensure this happens and that pupils are also punctual.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons. They are engaged in lessons and teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to work together, both in groups and as pairs. Where pupils sometimes become inattentive, teachers are very effective at re-engaging them in tasks thus enabling pupils to continue to make good progress.
- Behaviour in and around the school, at playtimes and dinnertimes, is typically good. Pupils play with their peers and across year groups, with equipment such as skipping ropes and stilts. Older pupils particularly enjoy the opportunity to use the all-weather pitch which enables them to play ball games in safety.
- The school uses its sports funding very effectively and this enables pupils to have access to specialist coaching and a range of sporting activities that promote pupils' health and well-being. Good quality, healthy food at lunchtimes also ensures that pupils have a balanced diet.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, overall. When prompted, they were able to talk about water and fire safety and aspects of keeping safe on the internet. The school's curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of keeping safe through the topics that they cover. Pupils generally said they felt safe in school as it has good systems to keep them protected and secure.
- Pupils were able to answer questions regarding different types of bullying. The school has addressed some aspects of this through the 'Give Racism a Red Card' programme. Some pupils stated there was no bullying, whereas others said it happened occasionally. However, all pupils were confident that if something did happen, then staff members would help them resolve the problem. The school also has a good anti-bullying policy.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and underpins the work of the school. Relationships are strong and there is a definite sense of caring for others across the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Since the beginning of term she has already had a positive impact on the progress that pupils are making. She has quickly and efficiently checked on the quality of education in the school and has acted swiftly to address areas that need developing. She is ensuring staff get access to training. She gives them quality feedback on their teaching so they can improve further.
- A new acting deputy headteacher, together with a strongly developing and committed team of staff, support the headteacher and welcome the changes and assistance that they are receiving, to strengthen their skills further. The system to check how well teachers are performing is being used well to improve progress. It links into the school's key areas for development, with teachers receiving pay based on pupils' progress.
- The school's tracking of pupils' progress is improving and the school is keen to ensure that all groups of pupils have an equality of opportunity to achieve as well as they can.
- The school's curriculum provides good experiences for pupils to develop their skills. Good links are made between subjects, and pupils' literacy and mathematical skills are developed well in other subjects. Pupils receive a good range of sporting experiences using the new sports funding. Pupils' needs are well met as teachers plan meaningful and interesting lessons to engage pupils in learning. Outdoor learning is a growing strength of the school.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- The school has a good range of developing partnerships, including links to other Catholic schools, which ensures the school's further development.
- The local authority provides good support to the school, particularly for the headteacher and deputy headteacher who are new in post.
- Although good liaisons with parents generally exist, the school is developing these further. Some parents do not share a positive view of the school and the headteacher is working hard to involve them more in the life of the school. She wishes to increase parents' understanding of the school's work and establish more productive relationships with them and the local community.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a rigorous, systematic approach to checking on how well the school is doing. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They use pupil premium funding effectively. Progress of pupils receiving this funding has been enhanced by good quality support from teaching assistants. They know about the standard of teaching in the school, through visits to the school, and feedback from the headteacher. The governing body has a wide range of professional skills which governors use to good effect. Financial management is good, including the use of the sports funding to develop teachers' skills. They also understand the school's and national data well, and know that progress at Key Stage 2 needs to improve. The governing body awards pay to teachers, appropriately, for their work.

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

Unique reference number	108391
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	425928

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	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Lauder
Headteacher	Joanna Bircham
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2008
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