

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

Victoria Lane, Coundon, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 8NN

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

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.

- Pupils' achievement is good overall. Pupils make good progress from their starting points to reach above typical standards at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good overall. There is some outstanding teaching for children in the Reception class.
- Pupils say teachers make learning fun.
- The school offers highly sensitive care and support and makes sure pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They care very well for one another and say they feel very safe.
- The headteacher and the governing body have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. They have clear systems to check how well the school is doing. They have put plans in place which have resulted in improved teaching and behaviour and ensured pupils make good progress again after a dip in progress last year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not always moved on to harder work quickly enough.
- Opportunities are missed for pupils to apply their skills in writing and mathematics across a range of subjects.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work and sometimes they do not have sufficient opportunity to act upon any advice given.
- Leadership responsibilities are not yet shared out sufficiently among staff. Too much falls to the headteacher and she does not have sufficient time for reflection and innovation and to fully develop the skills of other leaders.
- The targets for pupils' progress, identified in the school's plans for the future and in the targets set for teachers, are not specific enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the Chair and other members of the Governing Body. The inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including the school's improvement plan; the school's data relating to pupils' progress; the work in pupils' books and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in an assembly and during lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons taught by six teachers. He listened to groups of pupils in Year 2 read. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons.
- The inspector conducted six lesson observations jointly with the headteacher. He also observed the headteacher reporting back to the teachers on her findings regarding the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.
- The inspector took into account the 14 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector also spoke to parents individually and received an e-mail relating to a parental comment.
- Seven staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Gordon Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- There are lunch-time and after-school clubs which are run by school staff, external coaches and by the pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2014, having been acting headteacher from April 2013. This followed a period of instability in the leadership of the school.
- There are six classes: Reception; Year 1; Year 2; Years 3 and 4; Years 4 and 5 and Years 5 and 6.
- The school uses alternative provision to help improve the behaviour of some of the very few pupils who find it difficult to behave well and to support the learning of some pupils who have special educational needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to further raise standards and rates of pupils' progress, by:
 - ensuring that when pupils are able to, they are moved on to tackle harder work
 - offering pupils more opportunities to develop their skills in writing and mathematics in activities across the range of subjects
 - ensuring that all pupils are given clear information about how they can improve their work and the opportunity to act upon that advice.
- Increase the impact of leaders at all levels on pupils' attainment and progress, by:
 - sharing out leadership roles amongst staff so that the headteacher has more time to reflect and to innovate for improvement, to share the outstanding practice in teaching that is already in school and to develop the leadership skills of other leaders
 - ensuring targets for pupils' progress and attainment in the school's plan for the future and in the targets set for teachers are specific and rigorous.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are well below those typically expected for their age. Outstanding teaching helps pupils make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, more pupils than in the past are in line with or above what is typical and they enter Year 1 at the stage of development where they should be for their age.
- Further good teaching in Key Stage 1 helps pupils to make good progress. As a result, standards at the end of Year 2 are typically average. More pupils currently in Year 2 have achieved standards which are above average for their age in reading, writing and mathematics than has been the case in recent years.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 have risen in the past four years. In 2013, standards were slightly above average in reading and mathematics and slightly below in writing. Pupils in Year 6 had made good progress in mathematics. In reading, too few pupils had made more than the progress expected of them. In writing, too few pupils had made the progress expected of them and no pupil made more than the progress expected.
- Unpublished data from the 2014 tests for 11 year olds in reading and mathematics and from teachers' assessments of pupils' writing show pupils in the current Year 6 have attained above average standards in comparison with last year's national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. They have made good progress.
- The most able pupils are making good progress. Those that are in Year 6 have attained above average standards in comparison with last year's national averages in writing, reading and mathematics
- Teaching assistants are very highly skilled at teaching and supporting pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs in their learning. Allied to highly effective occasional support from other professionals, this helps these pupils make good progress.
- In 2013, most of the pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those pupils who were known to be eligible for free school meals, made the progress expected of them in reading and mathematics. However, too few of them did better than this. In writing, too few had made the progress expected of them. At the end of Year 6, eligible pupils were one year behind in writing and four terms behind in mathematics. In reading, they had the same attainment as other pupils.
- The school recognised and addressed this issue. There are clear plans now to ensure the progress of this group of pupils is carefully checked so that no pupil falls behind again. The additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium has been spent in putting programmes in place to develop reading, writing and mathematics and extra time for one-to-one and group teaching, where this is necessary.
- As a result, these pupils now make the same good progress as other pupils in the school and unpublished data from the 2014 tests show that their attainment is in line with other pupils in the school. This demonstrates that the school spends the pupil premium funding highly effectively and clearly shows the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.
- Phonics teaching (the sounds that letters make) is good overall and excellent for pupils in the Reception class. As a result, almost all pupils have a clear awareness of letters and the sounds they make and understand how this helps them to read words which are new to them. The development of pupils' skills in reading is good over time and the most able pupils have highly developed skills.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching is good over time in reading, writing and mathematics in all classes and for all groups of pupils. In the Reception class, children make outstanding progress because highly interesting activities are very well matched to their learning needs and their learning moves at a brisk pace.
- Activities are often exciting and engage pupils well. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 were totally engaged by their need to trap the dragon that had invaded their classroom. They were very clear about the skills they needed and wrote instructions with clear steps and information.
- Scrutiny of pupils' writing in Year 6 showed that they made excellent progress when they were given opportunities to develop their ideas creatively and imaginatively in longer pieces of work. However, pupils are hindered in making outstanding progress overall because there are few opportunities for them to develop their creative writing in English and in other subjects.
- In Year 2, pupils learnt about pirates and helped extend their understanding of a range of mathematical skills by finding treasure on a map and then plotting co-ordinates to hide their own treasure. In both classes, pupils developed their understanding of the steps to take to succeed in their work and they made good progress.
- However, pupils' progress in mathematics is good rather than outstanding because sometimes pupils continue to do what they already know for too long and are not moved on quickly enough to harder work. Pupils have too few opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in a range of contexts.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and pupils know how well they are learning. However, pupils do not always receive clear advice about how they can improve their work. They are not always given the opportunity to act upon any advice that is given. As a result, they are making good rather than outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say that behaviour is good in their lessons, around school, during assemblies and in the dinner hall. Attention in lessons wanes when the work they are asked to do is not sufficiently interesting or it is too difficult or too easy for them. Where pupils are fully engaged in their learning, their behaviour is outstanding.
- The school's records show that instances of poor behaviour are extremely rare. There have been no permanent exclusions and only one fixed-term exclusion in the past four years. Recent improvements in the consistency of how teachers manage behaviour in their classrooms have ensured that behaviour is good in lessons. The very few pupils who find it difficult to behave well are extremely well managed by staff. When necessary the school seeks the help of other professionals to support these pupils' needs. As a result, their behaviour has improved rapidly.
- Pupils show clear respect for one another, are extremely polite to adults and keen to talk about their school and their work. Pupils show maturity and enjoy taking on responsibilities as playground leaders and school council members. The school council has helped to improve playground equipment and help all pupils understand how to stay safe on the internet.
- Pupils develop social skills through the many opportunities to learn together in the classroom, school clubs and sports activities with pupils from other schools.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents and pupils are certain that pupils are safe and happy in school. There are rigorous procedures to ensure that this is indeed the case with all adults offering highly effective and sensitive care to pupils.
- Pupils feel extremely safe. They are very aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and homophobic name-calling. They say that there is very little bullying. Some rough play has been lessened by having more varied playground equipment. They are able to solve problems between themselves or by asking their friends or adults to help them.
- Attendance is average. The school has clear systems to check attendance and encourage pupils and parents to see the importance of coming to school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has quickly established herself as an effective leader. She has a very clear view of the school's strengths and the areas where it needs to improve further. She has improved behaviour. As a result, the school is a caring, safe and calm environment which allows good learning to take place and which enables teachers and pupils to thrive and give of their best.
- She has acted quickly and skilfully to reverse a decline in the rate at which pupils make progress by clearly focusing on improving the quality of teaching and teachers' understanding of how to measure progress. There has been highly effective ongoing training for all teachers.
- She has re-established strong teamwork and high morale and all teachers welcome taking on responsibilities and the accountability for their own classes. However, the school currently has too few teachers who have middle leadership responsibilities and the onus for school improvement has fallen largely on the headteacher.
- While the recent appointment of a deputy headteacher has helped to improve this situation, the headteacher has too little time to reflect and to innovate for improvement, to share the outstanding practice in teaching that is already in school nor to develop the leadership skills of other teachers. While she has ensured that teaching is good and pupils make good progress, this is impeding the development of outstanding teaching and progress.
- Salary progression has been used well to improve teaching and raise standards because teachers are very clear that they will only be rewarded when their pupils have done as well as, or better than, they should have done.
- The school's plans for the future have appropriate areas for development and clear procedures to check their impact regularly. However, targets for pupils' progress and attainment in these plans and in the targets set for teachers' performance are not specific and rigorous enough. While, the targets have helped pupils make good progress, there is not yet a full focus on pupils making outstanding progress.
- The headteacher regularly checks the quality of teaching. She understands what constitutes good teaching and judges it accurately. She is extremely clear in her feedback to teachers, who respect and welcome her advice. However, there is not yet a shared understanding of what constitutes outstanding learning.
- The primary school sports funding has been used effectively to develop competitive sports, to use coaches and teachers' own skills to develop expertise in teaching physical education and to introduce new sports such as tennis. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons, including the throwing and aiming lesson seen during the inspection. These are contributing well to pupils' physical development and well-being.
- While the school focuses on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, it also provides many interesting opportunities for pupils to broaden their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through, for example, the study of art, history and science and through a range of educational visits. However, some opportunities are missed to deepen pupils' understanding of these subjects or to use them to promote pupils' imagination and creativity in writing. There are too few opportunities for pupils to solve problems in mathematics.
- The school welcomes the support and advice it receives from the local authority and from its education partner. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have rigorously reviewed their impact so that there is now robust challenge to match the strong support the governing body has always offered the school. The Chair of the Governing Body is very knowledgeable and is well supported by other governors who understand the school because they have clear areas of responsibility which they regularly check, through a programme of school visits. They have clear systems to closely check plans for the future, the quality of teaching, the achievement of pupils and the curriculum.
 - Governors understand the arrangements to check on teachers' performance and any rewards for good teaching and take great care over appointing staff. The budget is extremely well managed and they are preparing rigorous plans for their new building. Governors receive clear information about how the pupil premium and the new primary school sports funding are

allocated and are very knowledgeable about their impact. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. All staff have been cleared as suitable to work with children and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm.

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	114264
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	443922

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	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Hall
Headteacher	Madeleine Brown
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2010
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