



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

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108391
LEA Gateshead
Inspection number 277962
Inspection dates 7 February 2006 to 8 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Margaret Shepherd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Smailes Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Highfield
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Rowlands Gill, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01207 542647
Number on roll	109	Fax number	01207 543603
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Sean Hall
Date of previous inspection	1 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs Anne Parkin

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Children enter the school with standards that are average overall, but with a wide spread of ability. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The number of children who receive free school meals is below average. Children are organised in mixed-aged classes apart from Years 5 and 6 where they are taught separately in the morning sessions. The school has had considerable staffing difficulties over the past three years, with several changes of staff and long term absences. In three classes, there have been staffing changes during the year. There is a job share arrangement in the Year 1/Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspectors agree with the school that it offers a satisfactory education. Children's standards and achievement were very low in 2004 due to a range of different staffing difficulties. The headteacher and governors have worked hard to improve this situation. In 2005, achievement was satisfactory and this improvement has been consolidated in the current Year 6. Standards and achievement are satisfactory overall. They are better in English because the school has focused on raising standards in this subject and has set up good quality target setting for children. The school plans to extend target setting to mathematics and science and to track and analyse children's progress more precisely as they progress through the school. It also plans to raise standards in the investigative aspects of mathematics and science. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff provide interesting tasks for children but do not give them enough opportunities to contribute to whole-class sessions. The curriculum, care, support and guidance are satisfactory. Personal development and well-being are good and behaviour is outstanding, but attendance rates are below average. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has put some effective systems in place to reverse the drop in standards. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The current teaching team are now more settled into their new roles, giving the school a satisfactory capacity to improve. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

- Track and analyse children's progress more effectively as they move through the school, and extend children's understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- Implement the school's plans to raise standards in investigative mathematics and science.
- Give individual children more opportunities to make contributions to the whole-class sessions.
- Improve children's rates of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Children enter the school with average standards. With the current staffing arrangements, children make satisfactory progress through the different classes and leave the school with average standards. The staffing difficulties have resulted in uneven progress over time. In 2004, standards were very low and achievement inadequate in Year 6. The school has worked hard to counteract the negative impact of the staffing problems. In 2005, children's achievement increased and standards rose again to satisfactory. This improvement has been consolidated in the current Year 6. The setting up of a separate Year 6 class for literacy, numeracy and science has had a positive impact on children's progress. The school has set a

priority for improving English provision, which has resulted in higher standards in this subject than in mathematics or science. By Year 6, children write confidently across a range of different styles. They enjoy reading and analyse their texts effectively, and confidently take part in role play situations. Their standards in mathematics and science are satisfactory overall. The weakest aspect is in the investigative aspects of these subjects, which the school is addressing. The school set itself challenging targets this year, which it is on track to achieve. Standards and achievement in Year 2 are satisfactory. The children's work shows that the current teaching team is ensuring steady progress across key subjects. Standards and achievement in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively to support their needs. More able children make satisfactory progress. The school has identified the need to target these children more systematically in order to accelerate their progress further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good overall. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Children respond sensitively to opportunities for spiritual reflection and enjoy the different opportunities for extending their cultural awareness. They thoroughly enjoyed their work with the African drums. Children's behaviour is outstanding and they know the difference between right and wrong. They settle quickly into lessons, move around the building very sensibly and play amicably with each other in the playgrounds. Children enjoy school and identify a wide range of different reasons why, such as being part of one big happy family, the helpful staff, the different clubs and the interesting visits. Children have a good understanding of healthy and safe living. The older children feel a real responsibility for helping and guiding the younger children. Children on the school council and the house captains are all proud to carry out their roles. Children have a good understanding of contributing to the community and really appreciate the many opportunities to represent their school. They develop a satisfactory understanding of economic well-being. They enjoy raising money but are not so clear about the costs incurred in the process. A weakness in this aspect is the attendance rates, which are below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are several good features evident in lessons. They include very effective management of behaviour, interesting tasks that match the different needs of the learners well and good quality partnerships between teachers and support staff. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards regularly and children respond well to these visual opportunities for learning. Teachers use

target setting well in English and use marking well to respond to children's individual needs. The school has identified the need to transfer these strengths across to mathematics and science so that children have a better understanding of what they need to learn next in these subjects. Teachers ensure a good level of involvement by children in their group work, but they miss opportunities to involve children more actively in whole class sessions. Teachers manage the organisation of the mixed-age classes well, particularly in the reception and Year 1 class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. A key weakness is the coverage of the investigative aspects of mathematics and science. The school has already identified this and is working to ensure the curriculum builds on the systematic development of these skills. The school provides a good quality curriculum for personal development, including a good range of clubs and many opportunities to work in the community. Children particularly like the opportunities to perform in different events, such as the dance festivals and whole school performances at the end of term.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The care and support systems are good. Children are confident that there are several adults that they could approach with any problems. The school has effective arrangements for safeguarding children and it takes issues such as child protection and health and safety seriously. Parents appreciate this aspect of the school's work. Children receive good quality guidance for their English work and in their personal development. This guidance is particularly good in Year 6, where the teacher provides good opportunities for children to explore their own feelings, such as the impact of taking the national tests on their personal lives. The school has clear plans to extend guidance for children to increase their progress in mathematics and science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is working systematically to resolve the staffing difficulties. She currently has a team of staff whose skills match the needs of the different age groups through the school. She has well-organised monitoring systems to support teachers in extending their professional skills. She sets sensible and carefully planned priorities that are having a positive impact on standards and achievement, such as in English. She has a good knowledge of individual children's progress and has identified the need to improve the systems for analysing and tracking the achievement of whole year groups over time. The deputy headteacher has a wide range of experience in teaching the primary age groups and is playing an important role in raising standards through her teaching of the Year 6 children.

The governors have extended their roles in leading and managing the school since the previous inspection, where it was a key improvement issue. Governors now work well with subject coordinators and are extending their knowledge of the details of the school's work. They are united with the school's leadership team in setting a high priority for personal development and well-being in a Christian context. The school values the views of children and parents and takes them into account when making decisions, such as providing friendship benches in the playgrounds. The school is realistic in its self-evaluation and its key judgements match those of the inspection. The school is keen to improve current standards and provision. Its judgement of satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection reflects its awareness of the variations in standards over time. However, the school is confident that the key staffing weaknesses have now been resolved and that the current staff team has the potential to raise standards further. The inspection judges that the school's capacity to improve and the value for money are satisfactory.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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

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9 February 2006

Dear Children

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school. I really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work.

The best things about your school are:

the different writing and reading that you do and the way your teachers help you to get better in these subjects

your outstanding behaviour in your lessons, around the school and in the playgrounds

the sensitive way you respond in assemblies and the way you know right from wrong

the fact that you all feel like you are part of a big happy family and the way that you look after each other

the way you keep healthy and safe

the different types of work that your teachers plan for you in groups

the partnership between your teachers and the teaching assistants

all the interesting activities that you carry out in the community

the way your school gives you care and support

your headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors, who are all trying to make your school a better place.

One of the things that I have asked your school to do is to get more children attending school all through the year. Another thing is to help you to understand

what you need to do next in mathematics and science to improve your work and to give you more time in investigating problems in these subjects. The final thing is for your teachers to ask you more questions when you are working as a whole class.

Best wishes

Margaret Shepherd

Lead inspector