



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

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108841
LEA Sunderland
Inspection number 278058
Inspection dates 19 October 2005 to 20 October 2005
Reporting inspector Derek Neil

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rutland Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Mill field
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Sunderland, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5537725
Number on roll	316	Fax number	0191 5537727
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Ford
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Galbraith

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 19 October 2005 - 20 October 2005	Inspection number 278058
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This Roman Catholic primary school is situated in the Millfield district of Sunderland.

The attainment of pupils on entry to nursery is broadly average. By the time they enter the main school it is above the level expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Recently the school has admitted a significant number of pupils who do not have English as their first language, including 48 who are at the early stages of learning English. Temporary classrooms have been added to meet the recent expansion in numbers and this has limited the amount of outdoor space, already at a premium, in which pupils can play.

At the time of the inspection there were 316 pupils attending the school and 34 in the nursery unit.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an effective school which gives sound value for money. Parents, staff and governors are rightly proud of the standards that pupils attain, their personal development, and the way they are cared for in the school, but this success has masked some shortcomings in teaching and in how well some pupils achieve.

Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and during their time in the school, and attain high standards at the end of each key stage. Their behaviour is outstanding. However, although there are pockets of good teaching, including some exemplary work in the nursery, many lessons lack sparkle and in some there is insufficient challenge for the more able. Consequently, pupils in some year groups do not progress as rapidly as they might.

The headteacher has a very good knowledge of the school's many strengths and of how it needs to improve, and inspectors concur completely with this analysis. She has laid firm plans which make her intentions very clear. Progress with these improvements, however, was held up early in her tenure by the urgent need to manage an unforeseen increase in the number of pupils, many of whom were learning English as an additional language. Improvements in teaching have been further delayed by the variable effectiveness of subject leaders. While some have developed their subject well, others need more time to learn how they can contribute to improvement. Good progress has been made with plans to coordinate the work of the nursery and reception classes, but this development is recent and the lack of a Foundation Stage leader is limiting the pace of improvement.

Although the school has made good progress with the issues identified in its last inspection and has good capacity to improve further, its overall performance is only satisfactory because of the weaknesses described above.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school should:
- ensure pupils in all year groups achieve as well as possible
- make sure that teachers check what pupils have learned in their lessons and plan the next steps accordingly
- help all subject leaders to take more responsibility for improving the quality of their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

After making good progress in the Foundation Stage most children enter Key Stage 1 with standards that are at or above average for their age. They continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1, particularly with their reading, and by the end of Year 2 many pupils read better than the standard expected.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 2, but their progress is not as rapid in some year groups as in others. In lessons their progress is sometimes limited because the work they are given is not sufficiently demanding or interesting. By the end of the key stage most do well in the national tests because they listen attentively and have good working habits, and because of good teaching in the final year. Their handwriting is very good and they use punctuation and spell words correctly. A small number of able pupils do not achieve as well as they might in mathematics. Nevertheless the standards children reach by the ages of seven and eleven are above those expected in English, mathematics and science and pupils leave St Joseph's well equipped for secondary school.

Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because teachers accurately identify their needs at an early stage. Pupils who have English as an additional language settle quickly into school and make good progress because of the highly effective specialist teaching they receive as well as the well planned support provided by their class teacher.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They like coming to school and enjoy lessons. Their behaviour is excellent and attendance is good. Their spiritual, social and moral development is very good. Pupils have a strong sense of what is right and wrong, show care and consideration for others, are polite and courteous, and respond thoughtfully to the distinctive Roman Catholic ethos of the school. However, their understanding of less familiar cultures is not as well developed. Pupils from a minority ethnic background have been welcomed into the school, and no racist incidents have been reported. Relationships between pupils of different cultures are good; this is a strength of the school. Pupils feel that bullying is rare and is dealt with fairly and quickly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Classes are happy, settled and productive because relationships are very good and because teachers know their pupils well. Some teaching is good: these lessons engage and motivate pupils to achieve success. In too many lessons, however, pupils are not given a sufficiently clear idea about what the teacher is looking for and so do not fully understand what they need to do to improve their work. This slows down their progress. Pupils generally enjoy their lessons but the content of the texts and tasks that teachers choose is not always as exciting as it could be. When pupils are given the chance to use their initiative, as for example in one lesson when they collected data for graphs to draw on the computer, the more able pupils enjoy being challenged and all achieve well. Teachers' planning

provides a clear outline of what their lessons will entail but it does not always make clear how they will check what has been learned so they can plan what pupils need to do next. Pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not spoken at home make good progress because of the effective support that staff provide, including the teaching assistants who work in close consultation with teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of learners well. It is organised effectively, despite the difficulties caused by fluctuating pupil numbers. The school works hard to overcome this problem; it recognises the need to develop further approaches to check that over each key stage pupils cover the necessary content in each subject. A range of visits and interesting visitors, such as a Peruvian acrobat, enrich the curriculum. The school exploits its links with other schools and the local community well. Many pupils take advantage of the good range of extra-curricular musical and sporting activities provided. Opportunities to take part in outside events like the 'Young Cook of the Year' competition add to pupils' enjoyment of school. A residential visit to the Lake District for pupils in Year 6 provides good opportunities for them to be challenged physically and to achieve success outside the classroom.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are very committed to the well-being of the pupils, and relationships are very good. The day-to-day care of the children is good, and pupils confirm they are well looked after if they are hurt or upset. Although the school buildings present some health and safety hazards, for example in the uneven play surface, the high level of supervision minimises the risk of serious accidents. Arrangements for child protection are good and staff have had relevant training. Risk assessments and health and safety procedures are adequate, but records of pupils' attendance are sometimes incomplete. The school makes good use of outside agencies to encourage pupils to stay safe and healthy, for example by eating fruit and taking exercise. However, the dull and restrictive outdoor play area limits the range of activities pupils can enjoy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher knows the school's strengths and weaknesses extremely well because she checks regularly on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress. She is supported by governors who play an increasingly significant role in monitoring the school's performance. On the basis of this thorough knowledge, senior managers have prepared detailed and pertinent improvement plans.

However, progress has been slow on a number of fronts. This has been due in part to the unexpected expansion in the number of pupils, many at an early stage of learning

English, and to an abortive bid for a new school building. These events necessitated a change in priorities shortly after the new headteacher had taken up post. Consequently, teaching and learning have not improved as much as originally planned.

Progress has also been delayed because information technology is not used to make management as effective as possible: attendance and assessment records and the parents' responses to the recent survey, for example, are all stored on paper, which makes it difficult to analyse trends. A further brake on the rate of improvement has been the headteacher's limited scope to delegate responsibilities. For example, while some subject coordinators have learned how to improve the way their subjects are taught, this is not universal. The help that bilingual pupils receive, largely due to the school's involvement in a local project, has been effective, but there is no leader to coordinate this work. The Foundation Stage has greatly improved since the last inspection,

particularly with the establishment of a new team, but there is no leader to coordinate this development.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	2	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	2	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	2	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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	No
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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2nd November 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly into your school. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play; talking about your school with you and your teachers; and looking at your work. Now we want to share with you what we thought.

Here are some of the many things we liked about your school.

You enjoy coming to lessons and you are hardly ever absent.

Your behaviour is excellent. You should be very proud of this.

You work very hard in lessons and do extremely well in tests. Many of you read very well, and your handwriting is very neat indeed. You use punctuation correctly, as your teachers have shown you, and your spelling is good.

Those of you who have come to the school recently and who do not speak English at home have settled in quickly and are learning fast. This is because you work hard and get help from the teachers and other pupils.

Those of you who need extra help with your work are doing well.

Your teachers and other staff take very good care of you while you are at school.

We think your teachers could make the school even better and this is what we would like to happen now.

Some of you in some classes could do even better work! For example, we think more of you could do really well in your maths tests. Your teachers can help you do this by making sure you understand what you need to do to improve, and by giving you work that is not too easy.

You have very sensible things to say about how the school could be better and we have asked the teachers to give you the chance to let them know what you think.

We hope you continue to enjoy the many good things about your school.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools
Annex B