



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

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111678
LEA Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number 278746
Inspection dates 2 May 2006 to 3 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Geoffrey Cooper

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Low Grange Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Billingham
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		TS23 3NN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 560056
Number on roll	252	Fax number	01642 644560
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Michael Doherty
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Jane Casey

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	2 May 2006 - 3 May 2006	278746

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's School lies within the Teesside conurbation, in an area that reflects neither significant educational advantage nor disadvantage. The social and economic background of many pupils is below average. Most pupils come from a white British background, although a small number of pupils have a range of other backgrounds. All pupils speak English as their first language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The incidence of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Attainment on entry is a little below average, particularly in the case of boys. Early communication, language and literacy skills are relatively undeveloped. The school has a distinct Catholic ethos. Following an extended period of turbulence a new senior management team is now in place.

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's own evaluation that overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Value for money is also satisfactory. The headteacher's strong sense of vision creates a secure and caring environment where pupils feel safe and happy. They behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel involved and included in the work of the school. A rich and interesting curriculum is well supported by good links with other partners, including parents and the local community. Pupils speak positively about their school and parents are very supportive of its work.

A recently improved management structure is rightly beginning to focus more clearly on raising academic achievement. Currently standards are above average by the end of Key Stage 2 and this represents good progress. However standards in Key Stage 1 are declining. Rigorous tracking of progress has identified the underachievement of higher attainers especially in writing and mathematics and particularly in Key Stage 1. The school is working hard to put this right. Strategies for self-evaluation are in place but they are cautious and not yet fully embedded.

Significant recent improvements have been made in a period of staff change. Standards and provision in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory but the school has a clear strategy to bring about improvement. Staffing, accommodation, resources, the use of performance data and management structures have improved. Teaching is satisfactory overall although there are elements of good teaching for the school to build on.

The senior management structure is well set to make further improvement. However, staff and governors do not yet play a full role in school self-evaluation and the preparation of plans for improvement. This is a barrier to the pace of development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards for Key Stage 1 pupils, especially for higher attaining pupils and particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Further accelerate the pace of implementation of planned improvements.
- Involve staff and governors more fully in the school self-evaluation and development planning processes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Inspection evidence and school data show that standards are around average by the end of Year 2 but are declining. They are above average by the end of Year 6 largely due to the good teaching this year group receives. Although the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory, given their potential, progress is not always consistent across the key stages. Satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage enables children, especially boys, to overcome some early delay in learning. However, progress in Years 1 and 2 has been slower, especially in writing and particularly for higher achieving pupils. Staffing, curriculum and

resourcing changes are now addressing this element of underachievement. Progress is brisk in Year 6. Good teaching and the mature attitudes of pupils provide the stimulus.

Measurements of progress reveal that a very small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities did not make the progress expected of them last year. Current monitoring shows progress of these pupils is similar to that of other learners. Convincing data show that boys make up an early lack of basic skills, performing well over time. Standards for boys are as good as those for girls when they leave the school. Strong and secure strategies for target setting ensure most pupils are challenged but greater stretch should be provided for the more able. Targets have been met consistently in recent years and pupils are well on track to meet current targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. This is better than the school's own evaluation. Learners are well equipped for their move to secondary school and the future because they have good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Attendance and behaviour are good. Learners enjoy school and talk enthusiastically about their learning. They concentrate well in lessons and show pride in their work. Current systems for rewarding pupils' behaviour and attendance work successfully and promote their good social and moral development. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and how to play and work safely. They understand the importance of a healthy diet and take water regularly throughout the day. Older learners play an effective part by taking responsibility for safeguarding younger ones as 'playground friends'. The effective school council leads all pupils to contribute well to the community by raising funds for charity and collecting for shoe box appeals. Good spiritual development is fostered by the school's Catholic ethos and lessons which enable them to reflect on a range of issues. Cultural development is satisfactory. Learners respond well to the school's provision of experiences that highlight the diverse nature of our society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Inspection evidence broadly confirms the checks made by the school and the local authority. Most lessons are at least satisfactory but not enough teaching is consistently good, or better. The school's evidence from the tracking of pupils' progress is that the quality of teaching is improving.

The quality of teaching in Year 6 is better than elsewhere. This is largely responsible for the good progress made and the above average standards. Particular strengths include:

- skilled questioning that extends learning

- the use and development of literacy, numeracy and ICT basic skills through other subjects, thereby improving pupils' skills from Year 2 and preparing them well for the future
- good classroom management ensures time for learning is used efficiently.

Throughout the school, teachers' planning is detailed and there is rightly an improved focus on setting targets for learning. In the best examples, marking relates directly to these individual targets. However, the checking of teaching and learning has focused mostly on teacher performance rather than on what pupils are learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well, usually progressing at the same rate as their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. This is better than the school's own evaluation. The school has not given itself sufficient credit for its recent improvements and innovations. Requirements are fully met. A successful response is made to national and local initiatives. There are good links across subjects, especially in the way literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are delivered. Effective provision is made for the personal and social education of pupils. However, the school has identified its own development areas and these relate to health education and to education for a culturally diverse society. The curriculum is enriched through meaningful visits out of school and well informed visitors into school. A successful programme of out of school hours activities includes sport for younger pupils. One parent summed up the value of the residential opportunity: 'They go away children and come back mature and responsible'. The curriculum supports the school's Catholic ethos well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. High priority is given to supporting vulnerable learners and their families. Teachers, assistants and outside agencies work together well to ensure that learners have the skills to cope with challenging situations. Monitoring of behaviour, attendance and risks is effective. Consequently pupils feel safe and secure. Child protection procedures are well understood and properly applied by staff. The tracking of pupils' achievements has been improved greatly and procedures are good. There is increasing evidence that the use of this information has the potential to provide good academic guidance, raise standards and further improve teaching and learning. Increasingly, learners know what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior managers lead the school's social and pastoral provision well. The new senior management structure is well calculated to lend purpose and power to the headteacher's

clear sense of vision. Monitoring and performance management successfully identify priorities for improvement, although the pace of change has not always been as rapid as the school expected. Self-review is mostly accurate but in some areas, such as the curriculum, underestimates the quality of the schools' provision. It has not benefited from a whole school overview involving all staff and governors.

Many governors are new to the role. They are eager and committed to learning their responsibilities. They receive good information about the school and know its strengths. Current strategies to gather first hand information are limited and governors are over reliant on the headteacher for guidance on strategic direction and its management.

Resources are efficiently deployed and staff and pupils have the tools to teach and learn. A good level of staff understanding ensures learners are safe and protected. Recent canvassing of the views of parents and pupils shows their satisfaction and confidence in the work of the school.

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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	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	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	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	2	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	2	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	3	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	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

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TS23 3NN

3 May 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for giving us such a good welcome to your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and having discussions with you.

You said to us that you enjoy school and feel secure and happy. We agree. It is obvious in the strong way you concentrate in lessons and in the careful way you work in your books. We appreciated the way you get on well with each other and adults. Your record of good attendance gives you a strong foundation for learning. Much of your strong positive attitude to school is due to the caring hard work of your headteacher and all the adults who work with you. By the time you are ready to leave the school you have good skills to use at your next school. Much of this is because adults keep a close eye on your progress and explain what you need to do next to make more progress.

Sometimes progress is not even. Your school knows about this because it regularly measures everyone's progress. Few higher attaining pupils achieve the levels of which they are capable, especially in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1. We have asked your school to do something about this and there are early signs that this is already happening. Your school is making changes and we agree with the way in which it wants to do this. However, this is never easy and some of the changes are only coming about slowly. We have asked the adults in your school to try to make the improvements faster so you will benefit from them earlier.

Already you help a great deal to make your school a worthwhile place in which to be. It needs your continued hard work and good ideas. We see this happening, especially in your 'playground friends' and in the work of the school council.

Thank you for making our time in your school interesting and refreshing.

Geoff Cooper

Lead inspector