



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Blaydon

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108395
Local Authority Gateshead
Inspection number 288088
Inspection dates 15–16 February 2007
Reporting inspector Carole Cressey

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Croftdale Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Blaydon-on-Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	4–11		NE21 4BG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4143108
Number on roll (school)	57	Fax number	0191 4142138
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Des Jenkinson
		Headteacher	Mr James Hannah
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is set in an urban area just outside Gateshead. Most children come from White British backgrounds. A very small number are from other backgrounds and have English as an additional language. Within the catchment area there are pockets of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is average, as is the percentage with learning difficulties and disabilities. The attainment of children when they start school is below average for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, which is well led and managed. The headteacher is well respected by parents, governors and staff. The care, well-being, enjoyment and achievement of every pupil are underpinned by the school's strong Christian ethos. The school has an accurate insight into its strengths and weaknesses and as a result is constantly improving and adapting its provision to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. The school works successfully with a variety of organisations, including the local technical college and schools in Europe. This enriches pupils' learning and personal and social development and prepares them well for life in the twenty first century.

Children enter the Reception class with attainment that is below that expected for their age. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the rest of the school and leave Year 6 with academic standards above those expected for their age. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics and science and in most years standards are significantly above average. Although standards in English are above average, they are not as high as those in mathematics and science. This is because some higher attaining pupils, especially boys, do not reach the standards of which they are capable in English.

St Joseph's is a caring school and has high aspirations for its pupils. Parents put great store by the school's welcoming family atmosphere. They particularly value how well their children settle into the Reception class and quickly become happy and eager learners. Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy learning and have a good understanding of how they can stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe and become responsible members of their school and local community. All statutory safeguarding measures are in place.

Teaching, learning and curriculum are good. New assessment systems are beginning to provide a clear and accurate picture of how well pupils do over time. This is helping teachers to plan for the next stages of learning and ensure that all pupils are being challenged and are working as hard as they can. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Assessments are not used rigorously enough to ensure that work is sufficiently well matched to children's abilities and interests, as a result they do not progress as fast as they could. The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to promote effective learning. The use of information and communication technology (ICT), visits, visitors and sport all help to make learning interesting; parents say learning for their children is fun.

The school gives good value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of higher attaining pupils in English to match that in mathematics by ensuring that they are sufficiently challenged.
- Use assessment systems to ensure that work provided meets the different needs of children in Reception.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards overall are above average, pupils achieve well and the school meets its challenging targets. After starting school with below average skills and knowledge, children make satisfactory progress and by the time they move into Year 1 about half are reaching the learning goals expected for their ages. This is lower than is expected for children of this age. In particular, higher attaining pupils do not make the progress they could. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and standards by the age of seven are broadly average. National assessment results at the end of Year 2 show that standards are declining but the school's own data shows that the teacher assessments are now a more secure reflection of pupils' abilities.

Consistently good teaching in Key Stage 2 enables most pupils to continue to make good progress. Pupils do particularly well in Years 5 and 6 where booster classes, grouping the pupils by ability, and some outstanding teaching enables progress to accelerate. Progress in mathematics is particularly good and standards in the national tests are consistently well above average. Although standards in English are not as high as they are in mathematics, they are consistently above average. In 2006, standards in English were not as high as they had been in previous years, but pupils achieved well in relation to their attainment in Year 2. However, higher attaining pupils, particularly boys, do not achieve as well as they do in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress towards their targets. The very few pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to their classmates and reach the expected standards for their ages and abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, are polite and friendly, behave well and are regular attenders. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities around school, which contributes to making the school a happy place to be. Parents particularly welcome the Year 6 'buddies' who care for the new children in Reception. Welcome cards, photos of children with their 'special friend' and regular story sessions make the youngest children feel secure and gives the older pupils a sense of responsibility toward others. The recently formed school council is now set to give pupils greater opportunity to influence school decision-making. The links established with schools throughout Europe and with organisations within the locality ensure that pupils develop a particularly good understanding of similarities and differences of cultures, a tolerance of other faiths and a sensitive and caring approach to the needs of others. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. They know that a balanced diet and regular exercise are essential for a healthy lifestyle. The pupils are pleased that their achievements in school and at home are valued highly and celebrated by everyone in the school. As a result, pupils' self-esteem is raised and they mature into confident young citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching overall is good and in Year 6 it is outstanding. The consistently effective teaching enables pupils to achieve well and reach above average standards. Warm relationships and well ordered lessons ensure that pupils behave well and enjoy learning. Lessons begin well with good questioning, which reinforces previous learning and checks pupils' levels of understanding. However, boys are often reluctant to become involved in this part of the lesson preferring to rely on the eagerness of girls to make the greatest contribution, even when they know the answer. The teaching of mathematics is particularly good. Teachers use different teaching styles, tasks and activities to maintain the interest of boys and girls and this has been very successful in maintaining the high standard of numeracy throughout the school. In one highly successful Year 5 and 6 lesson, pupils began by matching their wits against each other as they ordered complex decimals using an interactive computer game. The lesson moved on at a rapid pace and, as part of learning about area, they watched a video clip of a carpenter telling them how he used mathematics in his job. The teaching of English across the school, including the Foundation Stage, is not quite as strong. Work is not always as well matched to pupils' abilities as it is in mathematics. Higher attaining pupils are expected to do more work but not necessarily at the higher level of which they are capable.

The new assessment systems, including marking, now provide teachers with a very detailed record of pupils' progress and are being used to ensure that pupils are working as hard as they can. Individual targets are set and work is planned even more closely to reflect the needs of learners.

Very caring and supportive relationships in the Reception class ensure that children settle into school well. This enables children to have a secure start to their learning. However, planning does not provide sufficient differentiation for their abilities, especially in literacy tasks and activities. Assessment systems are not as robust as they are in other key stages and they do not track progress and inform planning so that different needs can be met.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. A high priority is given to raising pupils' self-esteem and to ensuring that pupils develop good attitudes to learning. The good emphasis throughout the school on literacy, numeracy and ICT is making a successful contribution to pupils' future role in society and their economic well-being. Effective links with schools in other European countries are making a strong contribution to pupils' understanding of the diversity of other cultures around the world and contributes well to their evident enjoyment of school. The curriculum is adapted well to boost learning for those pupils that have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has recognised that there is

scope to ensure that the curriculum provides further opportunities for those identified as most able to be given additional challenge. This needs to be further embedded, especially in English and particularly to promote boys' achievement. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. Opportunities to engage in sport are good, particularly for older pupils, so that they develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A good level of care ensures that pupils learn in a warm and secure environment. Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet statutory requirements. Good relationships ensure that if pupils have worries there is always someone on hand to help. Good induction arrangements into the Reception class and well planned transfers to secondary school ensure that children and their parents feel happy and well prepared for the different stages of education. Parents praise the arrangements which ensure that pupils who find learning difficult or have problems in behaving well receive good support, particularly from teaching assistants in lessons. The recent adaptation to the way in which the school tracks pupils' academic achievements is successfully highlighting where learning needs a boost. This information is used to set individual targets for pupils. As a result, pupils are becoming increasingly involved in understanding how well they are getting on. The school has rightly identified that this now needs to be firmly embedded.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, deputy headteacher, and supportive governing body lead and manage the school well resulting in all aspects of leadership and management being good. Leadership has successfully maintained the above average standards seen at the last inspection.

The evaluation of national and school-based test results is used well to set whole-school and class targets. The monitoring of the teaching and learning has been effective in identifying areas for development. For example, assessment systems have recently been revised and are proving to be a very valuable tool in tracking and measuring pupils' progress to ensure that they achieve their full potential. However, their use in the Foundation Stage is not as effective as in the rest of the school; as a result some children do not make as much progress as they could. Leadership has identified that boys do not reach the higher standards in English that they do in mathematics. This has been a focus for the school and there has been a recent improvement in their attainment. However, standards in English have not risen as much as they have in mathematics and some boys are still not reaching the higher levels. Governors are developing their role and are well informed about their responsibility in supporting and challenging the school. They have allocated funds to improve the school so that pupils can learn in attractive and spacious classrooms.

The majority of parents think the school is good. Their confidence is well placed. This is a good school which has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to continue to provide a good education for its pupils.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Blaydon

Croftdale Road

Blaydon-on-Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE21 4BG

19 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for being friendly and welcoming when we visited your school a short while ago.

Yours is a good school where your headteacher and teachers work hard to make lessons fun and help you learn.

There were many things about your school that we liked. You all behave well, work hard most of the time and achieve well. Your new targets are a really useful way for you to know what you have to learn, so do keep looking at them to make sure you are improving. When we looked at your work we were very pleased with how well you do in mathematics but noticed that you are not doing as well in English, especially the boys. You can play your part here by working as hard as you can in English. We have asked the school to make some changes to how the youngest children work in lessons so that they can make faster progress.

You all seem to care well for each other and those of you who are 'buddies' to the younger children in Reception do a fine job in helping them to settle well into school. Their parents told us it makes a great deal of difference to their children knowing there is a 'special friend' to look after them during their first days and weeks in school.

You seem to know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is so important to staying healthy and happy. The school council is quite new but we think you will enjoy it more when you get extra responsibility and start to talk more with your teachers about how you can make a difference to your school. Perhaps you might start to think about how to involve the younger pupils in the school council, so that they too can have a say in what happens to their school.

One of the exciting things going on in your school is the link you have with schools in Europe. This is making you sensible and tolerant children who understand how important it is to learn about other customs, religions and languages.

We do hope you continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Yours sincerely

Carole Cressey (Lead inspector) and Kathryn Dodd