



# St Joseph's RC Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 108508  
**Local Authority** Newcastle upon Tyne  
**Inspection number** 288122  
**Inspection dates** 23–24 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Moira Fitzpatrick

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Armstrong Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		Tyne and Wear, NE15 6JB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2739063
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	159	<b>Fax number</b>	0191 2739063
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Marshall
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Elaine Mathews
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
3–11	23–24 November 2006	288122

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and is set in an urban area of high deprivation. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is very much higher than average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is average. The school has a diverse population - mainly from White British backgrounds, with 30% from minority ethnic groups, mainly Asian-British and African, and a small number of children of asylum seekers, mainly from other European backgrounds. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is three times the national average; most are at an early stage of learning English and between them these pupils speak 15 languages. This has been a significant change in the school community in the last four years, with the numbers of pupils who do not have English as their home language rising from 5% to 30% of the school population.

## 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 and some aspects of its work are outstanding. The excellent care, guidance and support for pupils reflects the school's Catholic ethos, by helping them overcome a wide range of barriers so that they all achieve well regardless of their starting points, home language or specific needs. Throughout the school, pupils copy the caring attitudes they see in adults by being kind and supportive of each other. Pupils' personal development is good; their enjoyment of learning and their respect for each other are outstanding. These qualities create a happy and harmonious atmosphere in this culturally rich and diverse school community. Pupils have a good understanding of personal safety and well-being which adds to their confidence and sense of self-worth. They work hard and behave well because they want to please the teachers who care so well for them. Their parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all the school does for their children.

By Year 6, pupils achieve well from their low starting points. They reach average standards because they are well taught. The exception is in mathematics, where standards are not as high as in reading and writing. Thorough tracking by the school has recognised this as a priority for improvement. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and gives children a very good start by providing full-time placement for those in the Nursery. This makes a strong impact on the very low levels of attainment they have when they start school.

Teaching is good and there is some outstanding teaching of older pupils. Teachers' careful planning takes into account the different needs of all pupils so that they are motivated to work hard through activities that bring them success. A minor weakness in teaching is that occasionally teachers do not give pupils clear advice on what to do to improve. The good curriculum provides pupils with plenty of opportunity to develop basic skills while also allowing them to discover special interests and talents, such as playing a musical instrument.

The school is well led and managed at all levels. The headteacher's drive to improve the school by removing barriers to pupils' learning is well supported by all staff and governors. Dedicated and able support from the deputy headteacher helps to maintain high standards in both the academic and the personal development of pupils. Priorities are based securely on rigorous monitoring of the school's work and there is astute evaluation of what are the most important areas for improvement. Finances are well managed to raise standards so that the school gives good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in mathematics in all phases of the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and by Year 6 pupils reach standards that are close to the national average.

Children start school with attainments that are well below those typical for their age, especially in personal, social and emotional development and in communication and mathematical skills. They make good progress, especially in social and emotional development, but generally the majority do not reach all the goals expected by the end of Reception. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good progress so that by the end of Year 2, while pupils reach standards in national tests that are below average, all have made good gains in reading, writing and mathematics.

By Year 6, pupils reach standards that are close to the national average. This is a significant achievement given their low starting points in the Nursery. The rising trend of performance in English is a result of the school's focus on reading and writing in recent years which has had a strong impact on pupils' skills and confidence. This year, standards in mathematics dipped because of the unexpectedly weak performance of a few pupils in the national tests. Nevertheless, school data show that most pupils made the progress expected and a proportion exceeded this in mathematics. The school now rightly has identified improvements to standards in mathematics as a priority. By Year 6, there is no difference in the performance or achievement of boys and girls.

Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to their peers because they receive good support for their learning. Pupils who have English as an additional language are well supported to make good progress both by their peers who offer good support and by adults who carefully monitor how they progress in speaking and understanding English.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

This aspect of the school's work is good with some outstanding features. The pleasure and enjoyment that the pupils take in their work are exceptional. Behaviour is good. The respect and care pupils show for each other and their consideration for those who are vulnerable are also exceptional. Pupils of different backgrounds and cultures work harmoniously together and the pupils who come to the school with little understanding of English are welcomed and helped by their classmates. The school has been outstandingly successful in creating a safe and secure environment where pupils are happy. The Catholic faith is at the centre of this work and gives everyone, including those of a different religious belief, a sense of the sanctity of life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they have a clear understanding of right and wrong.

The school does all it can to improve the attendance figures, which are rising steadily as a result of its actions. Pupils feel safe from bullying and discrimination and know there is someone to turn to if they feel at risk. They have a good understanding of

how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They understand their rights and responsibilities as members of the school community and they influence its development through their work on the council. Fund raising and charitable activities enable pupils to contribute to the wider community. They have the personal qualities and skills to succeed at school and at work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; there is also some very good and outstanding teaching of older pupils. A strength of teaching throughout the school is the quality of teachers' planning. Teachers make good use of learning assessments to plan precisely for different groups so that all pupils learn at a good rate. This is a significant achievement when taking into account the wide range of abilities and needs in every class. Occasionally, teachers' feedback on learning is a little lacking in advice on specific targets for improvement.

Teachers set interesting tasks that both motivate and bring success to pupils of all abilities. This helps pupils to concentrate for long periods. Teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour, effort and support for each other play an important part in the good progress that is made. From the earliest age, children work hard to please their teachers and their love of learning creates a buzz of excitement when the school is at work. Pupils who learn English as an additional language are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants who plan so that they learn from activities that overcome language barriers. They are also helped to learn English at a rapid rate through the eager support they get from classmates and friends.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements and is well matched to the needs of the pupils. There is good provision for improving pupils' literacy and computer skills and increased resources and time have been allocated to developing numeracy skills. Education for health and safety is good. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which have a high take-up and which enrich pupils' understanding and enjoyment of their work. The residential visits for the older pupils broaden their horizons and test their adaptability in unfamiliar surroundings. Financial support is available to ensure that no pupil is debarred from such experiences. The curricular arrangements to smooth the transition to secondary school are very good and the school also benefits from a teaching and training input from this sector.

The school has as a priority for improvement the promotion of an integrated and coherent approach to the teaching and learning of subjects other than English, mathematics and science. This is developing well this term and having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

This aspect of the school's work is outstanding. Pupils feel safe and valued because the climate of care and support throughout the school is exceptional. This is most evident in the way the school meets the needs of its most vulnerable pupils. Those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not a first language are cared for well, supported effectively in their learning and included in all activities. It is this sense of security which enables all pupils to meet the challenging learning targets which are set for them. There are rigorous systems for checking on pupils' progress and well-being and for helping them to make choices. Effective action is taken when things are not as they should be. Child protection measures, including safeguarding checks, are in place and used appropriately by all who work in the school. Health and safety checks are undertaken on a regular basis, and when visits are planned out of school. Pupils receive very good guidance when moving to the next stage of their education. The vast majority of parents are appreciative of what the school does for their children.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. The school's very high commitment to the inclusion of every child and the shared sense of purpose are exemplary. The Catholic ethos underpins the care and support that permeate the work of the school, giving a very strong sense of security to the pupils; morale is high. The school's success stems from the very good leadership of the headteacher, supported by a very able deputy headteacher and the commitment and skills of the teachers and support staff.

The headteacher's excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development are the product of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work by staff and governors, and the headteacher's incisive analysis of the information gained. High quality teamwork and commitment among staff is a product of their involvement in and shared responsibility for improving the school. The school's finances are managed very well, so that spending is targeted effectively on raising standards and improving provision. The school gives good value for money.

The school has risen well to the challenge of significant changes to its intake in recent years. The many pupils who have joined with little or no spoken English have been very well integrated and taught. This success reflects the school's very high commitment to the inclusion of every child in all that it has to offer. The school has improved well since the last inspection and has a good capacity to continue to improve.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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 RC Primary School

Armstrong Road

Benwell

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE15 6JB

26 November 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. You also gave us a lot of help to find out about your school and discover what it does well.

Your school is a good one and there are some things about it that are excellent. One of these is how well you enjoy your learning and support each other in school. This helps all of you to achieve well. You told us that your teachers and other adults look after you really well so that you feel safe and can do the work you are given. We agree and think this is another excellent part of your school. Your parents are pleased that you attend this school because they know how well you are cared for and learn.

Your school is developing many strengths in you that you will take with you throughout your life. One is your respect for others and a willingness to look after those less fortunate than you are. It was very pleasing to see how well you care for each other and look after your school. Well done and keep it up. Older children set a very good example in the way they organise and look after things around the school. This sense of responsibility is another strength that your school helps you to develop.

We know you work hard in all your lessons and make good progress because you are well taught. The one thing we think you can get better at is mathematics, so we have asked the headteacher and teachers to continue to help you to do this. We know of course that you will help by continuing to work hard.

Our very best wishes to you for your continued success, and a very happy Christmas holiday!

Sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick and Mr Brian Dower