



St James' RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108723
Local Authority South Tyneside
Inspection number 288167
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Solway Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Hebburn, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	4–11		NE31 2BP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4832672
Number on roll (school)	195	Fax number	0191 4215151
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Sharon Grewcock
		Headteacher	Mr George O'Keefe
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of social and economic disadvantage. Attainment on entry is often well below average. More than usual numbers have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but fewer than usual have statements of special educational need. Virtually all pupils are White British. There are no looked-after children. The school provides no extended or additional services.

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 a satisfactory school. It is popular with parents and pupils and works closely with other parties to promote the achievement and well-being of pupils. Numbers of pupils on roll have remained steady for many years. In the Reception class, children are taught well and make good progress. By the end of Reception, children's attainment is close to the expectations for their age. In Years 1 to 6, teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory and pupils leave Year 6 having attained broadly average standards. Key Stage 1 results almost exactly mirror the national average. Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress in reading but not enough progress in writing. Last year's science results were good but mathematics dipped slightly.

Classrooms are bright, stimulating and well organised. On occasion, lessons start more strongly than they finish. Summing up at the end of lessons and finding out what pupils have learned and remembered are not always thorough enough.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They behave well and act sensibly. In combination with good quality care, this creates a safe and welcoming environment. Pupils are confident that their views are listened to and are happy to talk to staff if they have problems. Older pupils make a particularly good contribution to the school community by helping out with simple tasks and helping younger or less able pupils. There is a happy buzz at playtimes. Pupils are energetic in the playground and understand that it is important to stay healthy. Staff check, record and report pupils' academic development carefully, but do not use the information well enough to promote pupils' learning and accelerate their progress.

The curriculum incorporates a good range of school trips which support learning, promote personal development and add enormously to pupils' enjoyment of school. Many parents would appreciate more out-of-school activities. An emphasis on basic skills in literacy, numeracy and using computers, in addition to good personal development, stands pupils in good stead for the future. However, not enough thought is given to how different subjects could help pupils to improve their writing.

Satisfactory improvements have been made since the previous inspection, especially the outstanding new outdoor area for Reception children. The capacity for further improvement is also satisfactory. Leaders and managers have shown themselves to be very good at remedying weaknesses but less successful in spotting potential problems and preventing them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' writing in Key Stage 2.
- Improve teaching and learning by making better use of assessment results and ensuring that at the end of each lesson both teachers and pupils are clear about what has been learned.
- Develop management strategies that enable potential problems to be identified early and addressed quickly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. On entry to the Reception class, many pupils are at a very early stage of academic and personal development. Good teaching in a lively environment encourages pupils to learn through play and exploration. They make good progress and meet most of the targets for their age by the end of the Reception year. In Key Stage 1, achievement is satisfactory and pupils make uniform progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment results show that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are very similar to the national average.

While Key Stage 2 pupils attain average standards in English, this is entirely due to the good progress they make in reading, where almost all pupils reach the expected level and nearly a half exceed it. Progress in writing is not good enough. Only a third of pupils attained the expected level in 2006 and very few exceeded it. Achievement and standards in mathematics are satisfactory but test results were lower in 2006 than 2005.

Overall, test results in 2006 were an improvement on disappointing ones in 2005. That year, poor science results contributed to the school's performance figures being down. Good measures were put in place to raise standards and, in 2006, science was the strongest subject, with almost all pupils reaching the expected standard and about a half exceeding it. Last year, there was very little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, similar to all other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. This makes a strong contribution to their future well-being. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is satisfactory and nearly all absence is for legitimate reasons. Spiritual development is promoted well, as pupils reflect on world events and think more deeply about the impact of their personal actions on others. Pupils build up a good moral and social code. They have been involved in creating class rules and recognise the importance of honesty and friendship. Schemes such as 'special friend', where Year 6 pupils offer care and support to Reception children and 'writing partners', where more able children help less able ones, contribute well to the school community and pupils' growing sense of responsibility. Awareness of others as well as sensible and polite behaviour help pupils to feel safe and secure in school. Pupils make a regular and positive contribution to the local community through fund raising activities, participating in dance and choral festivals and entertaining residents in local residential homes. As they grow older, pupils learn to appreciate their local cultural heritage, as seen to good effect in a Year 4 study of 'local heroes'. Their multicultural awareness is satisfactory. Pupils are developing a good awareness of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. They are energetic at playtimes and participate wholeheartedly in physical education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are good in the Foundation stage and satisfactory throughout the rest of the school. Teaching in much of the school can more accurately be described as 'solid and safe' than 'sparkling and innovative'.

Teachers have a good understanding of what they want pupils to learn and involve them well in discussions. Planning is often good but, occasionally, tasks do not challenge all pupils equally or allow them to work with a similar degree of independence. Not enough time is left at the end of some lessons for teachers to establish whether all pupils have learned what was expected. This means that teachers and pupils have an incomplete picture of the progress that has been made. Relationships are good. Homework tasks are imaginative and contribute well to pupils' learning.

The teaching of writing is more effective in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2.

Displays to promote learning are vivid and informative but do not incorporate enough examples of pupils' work. This is particularly so with writing. This offers pupils little encouragement to try harder and produce written work of which they can be proud. Opportunities are occasionally missed to teach the importance of writing in different styles for different purposes. A poetry lesson, for instance, focused on the value of using similes and metaphors for effect but nearly all pupils wrote in prose and the essence of the lesson was lost.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The timetable shows a good emphasis on promoting pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and using computers. All statutory requirements are met. Religious education and personal, social and health education are valued subjects and contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Individual subjects are well planned for but not enough is done to ensure that subjects other than English are contributing to improving pupils' writing. There is good enrichment of the curriculum through regular trips in school time. These add interest and relevance to pupils' learning and often contribute well to their social and cultural development. There are currently very few activities before or after school and this is something that parents would like to see developed. Pupils are given good advice on how to stay healthy and safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Good personal care helps pupils to stay safe at school. They are safeguarded well. Good attention is paid to security and protection and the adults who work with pupils are selected carefully. Premises

and equipment are well maintained. Potential risk in activities and situations is carefully identified and good, prompt action taken to minimise the chance of accidents.

Educational support and guidance is satisfactory. The standards attained by each pupil are monitored through tests and teacher assessments at the end of each year. The results give an accurate record of the attainment of each pupil, but they are not used well enough to predict or promote pupils' progress or to set them suitably challenging work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. This is a happy school with a strong ethos and a contented staff. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are very effective in remedying weaknesses once they become obvious. They are less effective at anticipating problems and preventing them. Recent examples are the very effective measures taken to raise standards in science but the belated action to improve standards in writing in Key Stage 2. Consequently, improvement since the previous inspection and the capacity to improve in future are satisfactory rather than good. An exception is in the Reception class, where strong leadership and management have led to marked improvement and a good capacity to improve further. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are satisfactory. The headteacher has a good awareness of the quality of teaching in each class, much of it gained informally. More formal checks are infrequent and are not sufficiently well used to help improve teaching. Too often, points for future development are not identified and, when they are, there is no record of them being followed up in subsequent observations.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 James' RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Solway Road

Hebburn

Tyne and Wear

NE31 2BP

21 October 2006

Dear Pupils

As a few of you may remember I popped in the other day with a friend. Many of you enquired, 'Are you the inspectors?' Yes, that was us! Thank you for taking the time to talk to us and for being so polite and well behaved.

We had an interesting couple of days and found out a lot about your school. We got into every classroom to see you being taught and looked at your work to see how you were getting on. What we decided was that you were getting on OK but with a few small improvements you could be doing even better, especially in writing. Many of you read really well. We know because we listened to a lot of you reading aloud in class and because the Year 6 results last year were very good. If only the same was true of your writing. The problem is that there's not a lot of it and it's not very good, especially in classes 3 to 6. We're asking your teachers to look at this and do something about it. We also want you to work hard to improve your writing.

You told us you liked coming to school and it was clear that you do; that's probably why there's such a nice settled atmosphere. We checked up to see you were being well cared for and decided that you were. We weren't so sure that the results of tests you do were being used well enough to help you make more progress.

Keep trying hard; keep enjoying yourselves and good luck for the future!

Alastair Younger

(Lead inspector)