



# St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 114273  
**Local Authority** Durham  
**Inspection number** 289861  
**Inspection dates** 13–14 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Denis Goodchild

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>	Mill Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Gilesgate, Durham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		County Durham, DH1 2JQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 3865611
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	93	<b>Fax number</b>	0191 3865611
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pat Conway
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Craig Mrs Angela Boyle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2001		

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<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 13–14 February 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 289861
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and the leadership is shared between two headteachers. It serves an area which has high levels of social and economic disadvantage, though a number of pupils travel from outside the immediate vicinity. Pupils' attainment when they join the school is well below average. An above average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A variable number of children attend from Traveller families. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds; some with English as an additional language. The numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school during the school year is high.

## 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 with a strong community spirit. One pupil told the inspector, 'We work together as one team, one family.' The vast majority of parents agree with this view and are confident that their children are safe and cared for. The partnership between carers, school and external agencies offers effective support for pupils so that they can achieve well. Pupils' personal development is good because they are encouraged to work together and, in their roles as buddies and mediators, to develop caring and considerate relationships. The pupils' behaviour is good. Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Pupils are prepared well for the future because an effective curriculum promotes the development of basic skills and also contributes to pupils' enjoyment of school and learning.

Teaching is good and helps all pupils make good progress and achieve well. Boys achieve as well as girls. From a well below average starting point, children make good progress but are still below the expected levels by the end of the Reception year. Standards are broadly average in Year 2. The results of the 2006 tests were lower than usual because there were few higher-attaining pupils in this group. The results were lower in writing than in reading and mathematics. Standards in Year 6 are broadly average and pupils continue to make good progress overall. In the 2006 tests the English results rose and were marginally above average because of the effectiveness of the school's initiatives to improve writing.

Leadership and management are good. The headteachers set the tone through an effective partnership that reflects the spirit of cooperation within the school. A shared vision has helped the school to move forward in significant areas. The work of the school is carefully checked so managers know what needs improvement. Governors know the school well and provide good support in monitoring the work of the school. Effective governance and monitoring systems also indicate the school has a good capacity to improve. The school provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the effective work to raise standards in writing in Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 1.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach broadly average standards by the time they are ready for secondary school. Test results are affected by high mobility, significant differences between cohorts, and variations in the attainment of groups of pupils joining the school. Pupils' good overall progress is evident in lessons and in their work. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of good quality support.

Attainment on entry to the Reception class is well below what is typical for children of this age. It is well below average in language and mathematical skills and below in all other areas of learning. Good teaching and other provision in Reception help children to make good progress, although some do not reach expected standards in all the early learning goals.

The school's results in the national assessments for Year 2 are usually average. In 2006 they were below average in reading and mathematics and well below in writing. This was because there were fewer higher-attaining pupils than usual in this particular Year 2 group; nevertheless, the pupils met the targets set for them. They made good progress in mathematics and reading and satisfactory progress in writing.

In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress overall, but at a slower rate in writing. Nevertheless, because of the school's successful initiatives to improve writing, the English test results in 2006 were above average; pupils met their targets and improved on the 2005 results. Standards were average in mathematics and science and similar to those of previous years. The test results show that there is no significant difference in the standards reached by boys and girls.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils make good progress in their personal skills and this starts in the Foundation Stage where children work and play happily together. As they move through school they continue to enjoy their work and willingly accept more responsibility. The school council makes important decisions for improving the school. Pupils are involved in several initiatives which help promote and give them a good understanding of how to achieve a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' behaviour is good and in lessons they demonstrate a maturity and an ability to cooperate and help one another.

Pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is good because strong links with the church, and multi-faith and cultural weeks, give them a good understanding of belief systems and of other countries. Pupils' moral development is excellent. Roles as buddies and mediators develop a respect and sensitivity for the needs of others and a strong sense of what is right and fair.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers work well with their teaching assistants so that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and manage behaviour well; this provides calm, well-ordered classrooms which support pupils' learning. They use information and communication technology (ICT) well to teach interesting lessons

and encourage pupils to use ICT skilfully and confidently in all aspects of their work. This adds enjoyment to learning. Pupils know if they have learnt what they were supposed to because teachers encourage pupils to check their own progress against success criteria. Teachers are good at keeping the lesson moving on with a range of activities and provide many opportunities for pupils to work together. Occasionally, however, teachers do not give pupils enough time in lessons to practise and apply their new knowledge and skills.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum. All the required subjects and aspects are included. In the Foundation Stage, an effective blend of planned independent activities and direct teaching ensures that children get off to a good start. There is a good balance between indoor and outdoor activities, which covers all six areas of learning. At an early stage, good attention is given to the use of computers to support learning and this continues throughout the school. French and Spanish lessons, a good range of visits and visitors, and after school clubs enrich pupils' lives and learning. Curricular themes are used well when the school wishes to focus on an area of learning; for example, in a 'writing week' writing skills were developed well as each class produced a newspaper. The provision for personal, social and health education is planned effectively to support pupils' personal development; for example, teaching mediators show them how to carry out their responsibilities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because lesson plans are modified to suit their needs.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements to safeguard learners are fully in place. Staff are very caring and sensitive to the pupils' personal needs. Effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to participate fully in school life. The school encourages pupils to support one another; for example, buddies and mediators ensure that younger children always have someone to turn to for help. Pupils say they feel safe and cared for. The vast majority of parents agree. They appreciate being 'part of a family community... which gives us peace of mind and confidence.' This is evident in the good partnerships between carers, external agencies and the school, which unite everyone in support of pupils' learning. Pupils' achievement and progress are systematically checked. Teachers are therefore in a position to provide good guidance on how pupils can improve. At times, the more able pupils do not always get the benefit of this good advice.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteachers form a strong partnership built on mutual trust and respect, which extends to pupils, parents and the wider community. The school has the full support of the parents who appreciate the sense of family community within the school. The headteachers set clear priorities, which have improved provision in English, multicultural education and the outdoor provision in the Foundation Stage. They place a high priority on staff training, which has developed teachers' skills, for example, in the use of ICT. The school keeps a close check on standards and progress and uses this information well to identify groups of pupils who need additional support. Through self-evaluation, the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for improvement. Management regularly checks on the quality of teaching and teachers receive guidance on improving their work. However, these lesson observations would benefit from a tighter focus on learning and thereby contributing more effectively to raising standards. Governance is good and governors are very supportive of the headteachers. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and monitor the work of the school well. The school has successfully addressed issues from the last inspection and improved well.

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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	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

<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>	2

<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	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 Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham

Mill Lane

Gilesgate

Durham

County Durham

DH1 2JQ

15 February 2007

Dear Children

Thank you for helping me when I came to visit your school. I enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work because you and everyone else made me feel very welcome. I remember particularly how polite you were and how well behaved.

I know that you think your school is good because many of you told me so, and I would like to share with you some of the reasons why I agree with you. You learn well because you and your teachers make school an enjoyable place in which to be and make learning fun. You particularly like the way teachers use computers in the classroom and you use them very well in all subjects. Teachers give you good advice on how to improve, but I also like the way your teachers ask you to check on how well you have done. I have asked your headteachers to help you to get even better results in English and I am sure you will play your part in this improvement.

I think the adults in the school take very good care of you and I know that you and your parents think so too. What really impressed me was the way you looked after and cared for each other. The school council, the minibuddies, buddies and mediators make a big contribution to making the school a happy and safe place. Well done everyone for making St Joseph's such a good school.

I send my best wishes to you all for the future.

Yours sincerely

Denis Goodchild

Lead inspector