



Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 114282
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289865
Inspection dates 1–2 February 2007
Reporting inspector Gillian Salter-Smith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Westway
School category	Voluntary aided		Peterlee, County Durham
Age range of pupils	3–11		SR8 1DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5862264
Number on roll (school)	333	Fax number	0191 5182537
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Joe Raine
		Headteacher	Miss Christine Robson
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	1–2 February 2007	289865

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic school is a larger-than-average primary school. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number of pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds none of whom are in the early stages of learning English. An average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school takes pupils from some areas of significant social deprivation. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and the number of pupils with a statement of need are broadly average. The school provides much additional educational provision for adults, including family learning and support programmes. It holds a number of awards including the information and communication technology (ICT) Mark, Investors in People, Basic Skills Award and Activemark Gold.

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 outstanding features in the care and support for pupils, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the partnerships with parents and other agencies. Parents are quite right to be highly supportive of the work of the school. 'Sending my child to this school has been the best decision I have ever made.' 'I wouldn't put my child in another school but this.' 'The school goes beyond my expectation.' The school goes that 'extra mile' to involve parents in supporting their children's learning from Nursery through to Year 6.

A strong Catholic ethos and very good relationships between staff and pupils underpin the caring and supportive atmosphere in which pupils thrive and do well. Pupils' outstanding spiritual development is supported through close links with the church community. Pupils show great sensitivity towards others in their own community and beyond it. They know how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and many enjoy the extra sporting activities provided. The development of pupils' good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT prepares them well for their futures.

Pupils achieve well and standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. In 2006, pupils achieved especially well in English, reaching the top 5% of schools nationally when comparing results with similar pupils. This followed a successful focus on raising standards in writing. Standards in science are average and the proportion of boys reaching the higher levels in all subjects is lower than that of girls. Standards at the end of Year 2 are just above average but few pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics. Teaching is good and leads to good progress. Opportunities for practical and investigative work are not always taken in science and mathematics lessons and speaking and listening activities are not always well structured.

The quality of provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Most children make good progress and reach the expected levels of development because they are well taught and activities excite and interest children.

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher sets out a clear vision for the school that is shared by all staff and is firmly based on maintaining a positive ethos, raising standards further and ensuring that all pupils are well cared for and supported so that they achieve well. The new senior and subject leader teams have brought about improvements, but do not yet play a full role in checking on the effectiveness of the school's work. Governors are highly committed and support the school very well. However, they do not ensure that the statutory requirement for pupils to be taught the National Curriculum programmes of study for swimming is in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science, especially for boys, by providing more practical and investigative opportunities.
- Improve more opportunities for structured talk in lessons.
- Improve the frequency of monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching by senior and middle leaders.

- Ensure that all pupils receive their statutory entitlement to the National Curriculum programmes of study for swimming.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. From a below average start, pupils make good progress and reach above average standards by Year 6. Children start school in the Nursery with below average levels of development and have especially weak communication skills. They make good progress and most children reach the nationally expected levels by the end of Reception. Adults talk constantly with children, extending their understanding and personal development but children's communication and language development remains a weaker area.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2006 were just above average and an improvement on previous years when they were average. Writing is particularly strong. Having identified boys' reading as a weaker area, the school has taken action that is successfully improving pupils' reading skills. The proportion of pupils reaching above average Levels in mathematics is below average. Girls do better than boys in all subjects.

In 2006, Key Stage 2 results were well above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Girls reached higher standards than boys, especially at the above average Level 5 or higher. No group of pupils underachieved. In 2006, statutory targets for Year 6 pupils were exceeded in all subjects. Targets set for 2007 are challenging. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those whose home language is not English make equally as good progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development is clearly at the heart of the school and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have a very good understanding of their own and other cultures and religions. They are sensitive to the feelings and beliefs of others. They respond especially well to the spiritual guidance that comes from the school chaplain and the school's close links to their church. Their awareness is evident through their practical support of international and national charities such as CAFOD and HCPT – The Pilgrimage Trust.

Behaviour is good. Pupils do not consider that bullying is a concern although they are honest enough to admit that occasionally friends can fall out. Pupils enjoy school very much and parents talked about their children's disappointment if they could not attend because of illness. Despite the school's best efforts to tackle this, many families take their children away for holidays during term time and so, attendance is only satisfactory.

Pupils participate in many local events. They enjoy extra responsibilities around the school such as 'super buddies' and school council representatives. They are proud of what they are doing; for example, in the provision of extra playground equipment.

These opportunities give them a wide range of skills to help assure their future well being.

Pupils are developing increasingly healthy lifestyles and understand the importance of eating fruit, drinking water and taking part in the extensive range of sporting activities to keep fit.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and help pupils to make good progress.

Very good relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect and trust. They result in a positive atmosphere in classrooms and enjoyment of learning. Lessons are well planned and structured with a clear purpose that pupils understand. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach, which helps them to plan clear steps in learning and maintain a good pace to learning. Pupils' progress in literacy and mathematics is tracked closely. This information is used to plan activities that challenge higher attaining pupils. Pupils find their learning targets for writing and comments from teachers on their progress very helpful in reminding them of what they must do to improve. Support staff work effectively with lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities helping them to make good progress.

A number of features of teaching are satisfactory rather than good. There are too few opportunities for well structured talk. In mathematics and science, some opportunities are missed to use practical experiences to help develop pupils' understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Pupils' personal, emotional, social and health education is well planned and a learning mentor provides regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their concerns.

Pupils' basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy and ICT are well planned and taught and additional provision is made for pupils who need it. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not as well developed. The school has correctly identified the need to provide more investigative and practical work in science and mathematics.

A great variety of visits and visitors helps to make learning exciting for pupils. A very broad range of extra-curricular opportunities contributes well to pupils' personal, cultural and physical development. Apart from a small number of pupils who receive swimming lessons in Year 6, most do not receive their statutory entitlement to National Curriculum programmes of study for swimming.

In the Foundation Stage there is a good balance between activities from which children may choose and others that are directed by adults.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care and support are outstanding and guidance is good. These are underpinned by a positive Christian ethos and very good relationships. The support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities is very well supported by extensive links with outside support agencies.

The school goes to great lengths to involve parents in supporting their children's learning from an early age. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding children are securely in place. Day to day health and safety procedures are well established. The school acts swiftly to address areas of concern; for example, with regard to safety.

Support for pupils when they start school and when they move on to secondary school is excellent. Guidance for pupils' academic progress is good. Pupils who need extra support are identified quickly and pupils find their challenging targets for improving their writing helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's enthusiastic and realistic approach has successfully involved staff, parents and governors in sharing her clear vision of how the school should move forward. There is a determination to succeed in maintaining the very positive ethos of the school, raising standards further and ensuring that every child is well cared for and supported. New senior leader and subject leader teams have clear responsibilities that are well focused on raising standards. They have successfully developed an effective system to track pupils' progress that is helping to raise teachers' expectations and pupils' aspirations further.

The headteacher has quickly gained an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through secure evaluation of information on pupils' progress and through formal and informal observation of lessons. Not all senior and subject leaders are yet involved in monitoring the work of the school. The rise in standards in writing in 2006 is the result of well-focused action taken in recent years. These improvements, alongside the rise in standards since the last inspection, demonstrate a good capacity to improve. The school provides good value for money.

Governors are highly involved in supporting the school. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold the school well to account. However, they do not ensure that all pupils receive their statutory entitlement to the National Curriculum programmes of study for swimming.

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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?	1
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

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	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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

Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary

Westway

Peterlee

County Durham

SR8 1DE

05 February 2007

Dear Pupils,

Many thanks to all of you for making us feel so very welcome during our visit to your school. We enjoyed talking to many of you, seeing you hard at work in lessons and looking at your work. It is important that you know what we shall be saying about your school to your parents and the government.

You attend a good school and some parts of it are excellent. The school looks after you very well indeed. All your teachers and the staff do their best to help you to feel happy, safe and secure in school so that you are able to do your best. They work especially hard to make sure your parents and carers can also help you to do well.

You are a credit to your school. It was good to see that you look out for each other at playtimes and that many of you enjoy raising funds for charities. You enjoy your lessons, behave well and you want to do well in your work. You achieve good standards in English and mathematics and you have worked hard to improve your reading and writing. You could do a little better in science and more of you, especially the boys, could reach above average standards. We have asked your school to help you to do this by providing more practical work and investigations in mathematics and science. We would also like to see you learn to discuss and debate, and talk about your work more often.

Not all of you get the chance to learn to swim in school and follow the National Curriculum programme of study for swimming. We have asked the school to see what they can do about this.

Your headteacher and the staff are determined to make your good school even better. We have asked your teachers to carry out a few more checks to make sure that this happens. You can help by continuing to enjoy school and trying your best.

We wish you all the very best for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector