

St Josephs Roman Catholic Primary School Aided

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108617
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	309745
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Oglesby

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Peter Stott
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Jewitt
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Wallsend Road Chirton North Shields NE29 7BT
Telephone number	0191 2005077
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a larger than average school. It serves an area of high deprivation; the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than most schools. Most pupils are of White British origin; a small number are from other backgrounds. Of these, five pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has won the Basic Skills, Healthy Schools and Activemark Awards as well as the ICAN Early Talk and Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) accreditations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Joseph's is a happy and inclusive school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming, are proud of their school and are achieving well. Parents are extremely supportive. They particularly appreciate the high standards of care. One of many comments was, 'Everyone is very approachable and caring. St Joseph's, to me, feels like a family school, we are all part of it.'

Pupils say they really enjoy learning and feel secure. As a result of good pastoral work and excellent relationships they behave well and show kindness and respect to others. They are gaining a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. They show that they can accept responsibility well, both in school and in the wider community. The school council, for example, is sharing ideas with local planners in a scheme to improve the local area. There are many other opportunities for pupils to get involved; for example, through fund raising and church events. Pupils leave this school as mature and thoughtful young people, well prepared to cope with their next school.

Pupils make good progress. They join the school with a range of abilities, but generally these are well below average. Good teaching, a curriculum which meets their needs well and strong support helps them to reach the nationally expected standard by Year 6. Those who find learning difficult and those learning English as their second language make equally good progress. This is because the school works hard to understand their needs and makes sure the right help is available.

Teaching and learning are good in all parts of the school. Consequently, pupils are keen to learn, work hard and make good progress. There are some common strengths in all the teaching. Relationships are very good, so pupils feel secure and are not afraid to contribute to or tackle new work. Lessons are well prepared. However, despite many strengths, teaching could be even better and so standards even higher. Sometimes pupils make less progress because there are not enough chances to be actively involved or work independently to show what they can do. Pupils respond very well when they are asked to do this. For example, in a science lesson on seed dispersal in Year 5 the pupils were highly motivated when they had to work in groups, make decisions and challenge each other. In a few lessons explanations go on for too long and so pupils lose concentration and do not have enough time to produce their own work.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides leadership of very high quality and has established a culture of self-evaluation and teamwork. She leads by example in going the extra mile to meet the diverse needs of both pupils and families. Senior staff provide energetic and able support. Governors know the school well and act effectively as critical friends. Prudent financial management underpins all areas of school improvement and the school provides good value for money. Issues from the last inspection have been dealt with well. For example, an issue last time was to improve listening skills; this is now a strength. The school is not complacent and has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with skills and abilities well below those typical for their age. Good induction procedures help the children to settle into school quickly. The quality of teaching and the care, guidance and support children receive are good, ensuring good progress in all areas of learning. Very positive relationships and energetic teaching help children to learn how to get along with

others. Behaviour is good. Children become confident and mix well. They thoroughly enjoy the wide range of learning experiences available in the classroom, but do not have enough opportunities to learn outdoors. Teacher led activities are well chosen to ensure progress but more opportunities are needed to develop children's independence. Assessment procedures are used carefully to measure children's progress and staff work hard to ensure parents are informed and are involved in their child's education. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, enabling them to make good progress. Leadership and management are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement by ensuring effective use of time in all lessons.
- Provide more opportunities in lessons for pupils to work and think independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well to reach standards in line with the national average. They enter the school with abilities well below those usually seen, particularly in their social and communication skills. Children have a good start in the Foundation Stage and make good progress in all areas of learning. By the time they enter Year 1 they have moved much closer to the standards expected for this age.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 6. Standards in the current Year 2 are just below the national average, and by Year 6 pupils are working at the expected level with a significant number going beyond this, particularly in English. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as a second language are also making good progress. This is because their needs are identified early and the support they have is thorough and imaginative. Boys have performed better than girls in the last two years. However, the school has worked hard to raise motivation and standards for girls. There is now no significant difference in the rates of progress.

Performance in the national tests varies considerably from year to year. In 2007, for example, standards for both 7 and 11-year-olds dipped from the previous two years. This was because these cohorts had a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and several pupils who joined the school mid-year through. Nevertheless, these pupils all made good progress from their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils are proud of their school and make the most of all that it offers. Many join the nursery with limited social and language skills, but they grow in confidence and mature into friendly, polite young people. Behaviour in lessons is consistently good. Pupils say there is almost no bullying and any incidents are quickly dealt with. They understand why it is important to eat healthily and to keep safe and fit. The school's effective work in this area has had a positive impact within the wider community, for example, through the 'Kids Get Active' project. The school council provides a good opportunity for pupils to learn how to influence decision-making. They are particularly pleased with the improvement they argued for in the play equipment for lunchtimes. Older pupils take on their responsibilities as 'play leaders' and

'buddies' enthusiastically and maturely. They enjoy acting as reading partners for younger pupils. Levels of attendance are in line with other schools and improving, because the school monitors and follows up absences very carefully. Pupils leave St Joseph's well prepared for the next stage of their education. They have positive attitudes, good social skills and confidence from knowing they have achieved well in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. This is the main reason for pupils' good achievement and personal development.

Teachers establish good routines and give calm, clear explanations. Basic skills are taught and practised thoroughly. Teachers increasingly encourage pupils to think about their own learning and make sure they understand how to improve. Adults work together very well, for example, the strong team of teaching assistants is making a significant contribution to achievement and pupils' personal development. All of these strengths result in behaviour and attitudes which are at least good and in some lessons excellent.

In some lessons, learning slows at times. This is sometimes because teachers spend too much time explaining and so pupils do not have enough time for their independent work. One group of older pupils echoed the inspection findings. 'Our teachers sometimes talk a lot, if we had more time for our own work we could do better.' Another reason is that teachers sometimes miss chances to move pupils on, for example, when the work planned is proving too easy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. The school is successful in making sure that all pupils have equality of access and chances to succeed. This is one reason for their good achievement. A strength is the use of visitors' expertise to add to what the school provides, for example in drama, history, French and music. There is a good range of popular clubs, visits and events. These are appreciated by both pupils and parents, and are helping to develop pupils' confidence and social skills.

Teachers constantly evaluate how well the curriculum is meeting pupils' needs and work together to make improvements. For example, a review of mathematics' teaching has helped to raise standards since the last inspection. A current priority is to try to make learning more interesting and relevant by planning stronger links between subjects. Pupils are responding well to this. For example, they produced some impressive writing after meeting some 'Victorians' on a history visit. Pupils are making sound progress in information technology, but they have limited access to computers because the suite is quite small and there are very few machines in the classrooms.

The school has good programmes for helping pupils to deal with others and lead a healthy and safe life. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as those learning English as their second language, are very well provided for. There is an increasing focus on what is required to meet the needs of the more able pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school provides high levels of care and support from a committed staff who know the pupils well. Several parents commented on this, for example, 'I am really happy for my second child's education to begin in this fabulous school. I have always been impressed with the support given to both pupils and parents.' Pupils say they feel well looked after and there is always someone to listen when things go wrong. Child protection and risk assessment procedures meet requirements and are understood by all adults in the school. Pupils' learning and personal needs are identified early. They are supported well, both by school staff and through excellent links with many outside agencies.

Academic guidance is good and is having a growing impact on pupils' achievement.

Pupils like the new system for individual targets and say that these help them to understand how to improve. However, some think their targets could be more challenging and changed more frequently. They also appreciate the high quality marking and advice which some teachers provide.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The headteacher, well supported by her deputy and senior staff, has created a team determined to provide the best possible education for all pupils. There is a strong sense of shared purpose amongst all adults. This is one reason for the pupils' positive attitudes, good behaviour and good progress.

Leaders and all staff share information and ideas about how well pupils are learning. They listen to the views of parents and pupils. The school has an accurate and self-critical picture of its strengths and weaknesses. This is informed by good systems for tracking each pupil's progress. Senior staff keep a check on the quality of teaching and learning but this has not been sufficiently focussed on checking what pupils have achieved in their lessons.

Governors are committed and well informed. They carry out their duties effectively. Recently they have become more closely involved in the daily life of the school. They are both champions of the school and, when necessary, demanding partners.

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Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

2 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Josephs Roman Catholic Primary School Aided, North Tyneside, NE29 7BT

As you know, I inspected your school recently for two days. I am writing to thank you for being so helpful, welcoming and polite. My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit very much. We read lots of letters from your parents; please thank them for me for taking the trouble. It is clear that they appreciate St Joseph's as much as you do. Many of them mentioned how helpful the teachers are when they come to talk about a problem.

We liked lots of things about your school. Everyone seems to get along exceptionally well, you listen well in lessons and work hard. No wonder you are making good progress. We could see you enjoy your lessons. Your teachers work hard to make the work interesting. I know you enjoy all the clubs and visits as well as the extra things like sport, music, drama and French. You showed us how responsible you can be, for example, as reading partners or playground buddies.

We think there are two ways that your school could be even better.

- Some of you said that you would like more time in some lessons to get on with improving your own work, rather than listening. We agree and have asked your teachers to keep this in mind.
- We also thought that in a few lessons the teachers could challenge you a bit more. Some of you said you would like harder targets and you especially liked lessons where you really had to think hard and try new things.

We hope you continue to do well. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Oglesby

Lead inspector