

St Joseph's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108724
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	309780
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Denis Goodchild

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ailine Gibson
Headteacher	Mrs Geraldine Egdell
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	St Joseph's Way Hedworth Jarrow Tyne and Wear NE32 4PJ
Telephone number	0191 5364311
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. It serves an area of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability is below average. The number of pupils leaving or joining other than at the start of the school year is below average. The large majority of pupils are from a White British heritage.

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 with some good features. It provides satisfactory value for money.

The school is highly valued by parents who appreciate the priority the school places on pupils' personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave school pupils are mature, responsible individuals and reflect all that the school stands for. They are caring, reflective and have developed good attitudes to learning. As a result their behaviour is very good around school and they work hard in lessons. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is average. Pupils understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle though are honest enough to confess to not always making healthy choices. They willingly accept responsibilities and contribute to the smooth running of the school day. Pupils are generous in their support of local and national charities.

The national assessment results in 2007 for Year 2 pupils were broadly average though slightly below in writing. Evidence shows that standards in the current Year 2 are similar though writing is below expected levels. Nevertheless, progress is satisfactory. Progress is also satisfactory by the end of Year 6. Results for Year 6 pupils in the 2007 national tests were broadly average but the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics and science was below average. In the current Year 6, school records show that standards are again similar to those of last year. School action has increased the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels, particularly in mathematics.

Teaching is satisfactory overall leading to pupils' satisfactory achievement. Progress is good where teachers are focused on what they want pupils to learn, give pupils the knowledge and skills and then time to use what they know. This approach is not consistent across the school and at times discussion and questioning are not sufficiently challenging. This slows progress. Marking does not consistently give pupils advice which would help them to improve their work and thus accelerate progress. The good curriculum promotes pupils' personal development very effectively and a wide range of activities develop an enjoyment of learning. Very good relationships are at the heart of the care and support pupils receive. They are confident they have someone to go to should they have any concerns. The arrangements for tracking pupils' academic progress are not effective enough in identifying pupils who are not making appropriate progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors, staff and parents are full of praise for the effective leadership of the headteacher in promoting the care and personal development of pupils. Management monitors the school's work and has identified appropriate areas for development with some indications of impact on pupils' performance. The school has yet to implement fully a system for tracking pupils' progress or to develop managers' role in monitoring progress. Governors' contribution to the strategic development of school improvement is not fully developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. Children start Reception with skills and knowledge broadly typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress overall and enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge close to expected levels. An appropriate range of indoor activities provides opportunities for children to exercise choice and work independently.

Play-based activities encourage an interest in the world about them. Outdoor provision has improved since the last inspection. Though space is limited, it is now secure and provides further opportunities to develop pupils' skills. Planning ensures that the basic skills are taught and staff carefully check pupils' progress. Good relationships mean children are well cared for and happy. The new staff have been successful in creating a bright welcoming environment and are keen to seek advice on how to further improve provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing by the end of Year 2.
- Ensure marking identifies what pupils need to do to improve.
- Implement a system that rigorously tracks pupils' progress and identifies those pupils not making sufficient progress.
- Develop the managers' role in monitoring standards and progress.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average and achievement and progress are satisfactory. In the 2007 national assessments, results for Year 2 pupils were broadly average in reading and mathematics and slightly below in writing. Current standards in Year 2 are at expected levels in reading and mathematics and the school has sustained the improvement seen in 2007. Writing in Year 2 remains weaker. Progress and achievement is satisfactory compared to their starting points.

National test results for Year 6 pupils in 2007 were broadly average. This represents satisfactory progress and achievement in English. A significant minority of pupils did not achieve as well as expected in the mathematics and science tests and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was below average. The school did not achieve the challenging targets set. Standards in the current Year 6 are broadly at expected levels, representing satisfactory progress and achievement. Inspection evidence indicates that action taken by the school has increased the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the sensitive support of teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are proud of their school and identify strongly with its aims and values. Their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is good, exemplifying the religious ethos of the school and demonstrated by their high levels of responsibility and maturity. Very good relationships underpin the very good behaviour of pupils. This is also reflected in the care and concern shown by older pupils to younger pupils during the school day. They feel free from intimidation and bullying but are mature enough to reflect that 'sometimes we fall out.' Pupils reflect on their own feelings and relationships as shown in some sensitive writing about 'a friendship never made'. They value that their views are respected and concerns swiftly addressed. Pupils therefore enjoy coming to school and attendance is average. In this atmosphere pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of

the need for a healthy lifestyle. The school council has the confidence to represent the views of their peers and plays its part in improving the school. Pupils support others less fortunate than themselves through fundraising events for a range of charities. Their maturity and good social skills are a sound preparation for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features but also inconsistencies. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare lessons with activities that generally interest the pupils. Computer technology is used well to explain new ideas and demonstrate new skills and is effective in sustaining pupils' attention. Good relationships and high expectations mean that pupils are well behaved and lessons are productive. Effective teaching was demonstrated in a Year 4 science lesson. The introduction was delivered with pace, was sharply focused on what the pupils were to learn and pupils were given time to use and apply what they knew. Pupils therefore made good progress in their understanding of simple electric circuits. On occasions the pace of teaching is too slow. Introductions and discussions do not involve all the children and questioning does not probe and challenge pupils' thinking. Pupils do not have sufficient time to use and apply what they know and this slows progress. Marking praises pupils' efforts and there are some good examples where pupils are given advice on how to improve. This is not consistent across the school and many pupils do not get the benefit of this advice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is very effective in promoting pupils' personal, social and health education and their understanding of how to stay healthy. Computer technology is used well and pupils have opportunities to use and develop their computer skills in other curriculum areas. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are developed within other subjects with particularly good examples of pupils using their writing skills in science and topic work. The school is seeking to extend these opportunities further. A greater focus on science investigations and on applying number has increased the proportion of pupils working at the higher levels. The curriculum is adapted to take account of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A good range of visits, visitors and after-school activities enriches the curriculum, provides opportunities for pupils to build on and acquire new skills and promotes enjoyment of learning. This was evident in an exciting Year 6 drumming lesson. Provision in music is good. The Year 5 links with the local secondary school offers opportunities to consider multicultural issues and the study of subjects across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. The very good relationships underpin pupils' personal development and pupils are therefore confident that problems will be resolved quickly. Parents are made very welcome and appreciate that the staff are very approachable and will listen and deal with any concerns. This was evidenced by the large number of parents and others who attended a Reception 'Good Work' assembly during the inspection. Appropriate health and safety routines and risk assessments are in place and child protection and

safeguarding arrangements are secure. Systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress are not fully in place which limits the school's ability to identify those groups of pupils not making the appropriate progress. Teachers and teaching assistants provide sensitive support to those pupils needing additional help with their work. Links with the parish, community and sporting organisations and other schools contribute to the smooth transition pupils make into secondary education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has the full support of the staff and parents who recognise her effective leadership in ensuring that the school sustains the high priority placed on pupils' personal development. Her personal skills and concern for the individual ensure that staff are well supported and receive the necessary training to address change. Staff are therefore receptive to change and morale is high.

Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are satisfactory and the school has identified appropriate areas for development. This has enabled the school to make improvements in the teaching of mathematics and science and increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels. However, management does not yet effectively check pupils' progress. This limits their ability to identify pupils who are not making sufficient progress, to give them the necessary support and thus raise achievement. The school is in the early stages of implementing such a system but management's understanding of how to use the information to promote school improvement is not fully developed.

The headteacher has the full support of the governors who appreciate and value her personal qualities. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses but are not yet fully involved in the strategic development of the school nor is their role as a critical friend fully developed. Governors are keen to develop their role further and are attending courses on financial management. Given the satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, the high morale of the staff and the early indications of the impact of school action planning, the school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	3

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?	2
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Tyneside, NE32 4PJ

Thank you for making us very welcome when we visited your school. A special thanks to the pupils who talked to Mr Dixon and me and provided us with lots of information about your school. This helped us to make our judgement that your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that lots of interesting activities help to make learning interesting. You certainly enjoyed the two days we were in school, especially the drummers in Year 6 and when you were rehearsing for the school performance.

Your parents agree with you that the school cares for you. We also agree because of how well they teach you how to get on with each other and help one another. This helps you to grow into the confident mature children we saw in Year 6. You like and get on very well with your teachers so you are happy to share any worries or concerns with them. Your behaviour is very good so well done all of you.

You are attentive in lessons and work hard. We think your standards of work are satisfactory but we have asked your school to improve the standards of writing by the end of Year 2. You make satisfactory progress in lessons and sometimes good progress, especially when teachers give you lots of time to practise and use your skills. Teachers are good at telling you when you have done well. But we have asked them to make sure that marking gives you good advice on how to improve. We think this will help you to improve a lot quicker. We have also asked that teachers and school managers accurately and regularly check your progress and make sure all of you get the help you need to improve.

Once again thank you for your help. Your headteacher and everybody else are working hard to make your school even better and I am sure you will play your part.

Good luck for the future.

Denis Goodchild

Lead inspector