

St John Bosco Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108844
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	309814
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Clark
Headteacher	Mrs Anne MacKay
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Bradford Avenue Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR5 4JW
Telephone number	0191 5536921
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school which is set in an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. The school population is from mainly White British heritage, with very few pupils who have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is significantly above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. When children start school in the Nursery, many have speech and language problems and weak social skills.

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. Pupils achieve well because of the outstanding care and support they receive. Dedicated staff create a happy, secure learning environment in which pupils thrive. Standards are average by Year 6 indicating that pupils have made good progress from low starting points in the Nursery. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average, though pupils have made satisfactory progress from the start of Year 1. Throughout the school, standards in writing are lower than in reading. Pupils' personal development is excellent because they are so well nurtured and encouraged from the time they start in the Nursery. The school's strong Catholic ethos gives excellent support to the development of caring attitudes, good self esteem and a love of learning in pupils. Their behaviour is excellent, ensuring that time is used well for learning. Pupils love to take on responsibilities and are very generous in their fund-raising activities. They mature into confident, caring young people who have a good idea of how to stay safe and healthy and have a clear understanding of what it means to be a good citizen.

Good teaching is based on a well planned and interesting curriculum. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn from visiting specialists and teachers from other schools as well as through visits out of school. Teachers use a range of methods to involve pupils actively in their learning. Pupils say they enjoy the variety of sometimes working with a partner, learning through discussion or doing practical activities. Teachers do not use information from previous learning consistently well across the school. This reduces the quality of learning in Key Stage 1, where pupils' work is sometimes not well matched to pupils' needs and they are not challenged to do their best.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has given a very good lead to improvement since the last inspection so that standards have improved. Teamwork is well developed and staff are all committed to improvements. During the headteacher's absence, on secondment to a neighbouring school this year, the senior leadership team worked hard on new developments, led by the deputy headteacher. Nevertheless, the school's rate of progress slowed slightly during this time because the senior team had less time to monitor the work of the school. Despite this temporary slowing, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Governors are well informed and give good support to the school's improvement. They manage finances well and ensure that resources are used effectively to help overcome some complex barriers to learning. Parents hold the school in high esteem for the care and support it gives to them and their children, praising the school because they feel, 'staff could not be more approachable or helpful'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start Nursery with skills that are well below what is typical for their age. They make good progress so that by the time they leave the Foundation Stage children are achieving standards that are slightly below those typical for children of this age. Recent improvements to encourage children to begin to write are having a particularly good impact on developing confidence and an enthusiasm to draw and write. This growing confidence is well reflected in the vibrant displays around the unit. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their children's learning and provide valuable additional support in school. Children enjoy learning: their enthusiasm was tremendous as they took on key roles in a traditional story for other children

to watch. Assessment information, along with information gathered on home visits before the children start in the Nursery, is used to excellent effect to identify and provide support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Ongoing records of progress are comprehensive and provide a detailed portfolio for each child. Teaching is good. Staff promote good relationships and provide a caring and secure place for children to thrive. The continuity between the Nursery and the Reception class is progressing well. There is shared indoor and outdoor provision that enables children to feel secure wherever they work or play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.
- Strengthen the quality of monitoring and evaluating across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Key Stage 1 who do not make as much progress as their peers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The majority of pupils make expected progress from the start of Year 1, though there are inconsistencies in the progress of some groups such as boys and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Elsewhere in the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language, make the same good progress as their peers because they are well supported by teaching assistants.

By Year 6, pupils reach average standards in English, mathematics and science and have made good progress from their starting points in the Nursery. Results in national tests in 2007 were above the national average in mathematics and science. English results were slightly lower because few pupils reached the higher Level 5 in the writing tests. Pupils now in Year 6 are on course to reach their challenging targets in this year's tests, except in writing at the higher level. Throughout the school standards in reading are higher than in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. Pupils recognise the needs and rights of others both in school and the wider world. This allows them to become tolerant of differences so that they welcome newcomers, including those from other cultures, and help them settle quickly into school. Although attendance is around the national average it has improved markedly because of the strategies used by the school to promote good attendance. Pupils feel very safe and happy in school, because 'our teachers know us so well, and everyone is kind'. They know how to stay safe and healthy and enjoy the opportunities the school provides to learn about these things. For example, the Internet-Expo chef fired their enthusiasm for healthy eating during a day of demonstrations.

Pupils are courteous and considerate towards each other, their teachers and visitors. Their excellent behaviour, hard work and great enjoyment of learning help them to achieve well. They are happy to give and receive support in lessons and this creates a very positive atmosphere in classrooms. Pupils of all ages are eager to take on responsibility. For example, pupils carry out numerous daily tasks that help the school run smoothly and they raise funds for charitable causes. The school council, play leaders and monitors all make a big difference to the life of

the school through caring for each other, raising funds and deciding on improvements to the playground. Their work on the anti-bullying charter helps to make the school a safe, secure place for all. All of these experiences prepare pupils well for the next stage of learning and give them a good understanding of what it is to be a good citizen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Most teachers plan activities that engage and motivate pupils so their learning moves at a good pace. In most classes, teachers use a wide range of teaching methods that make learning enjoyable. Working with partners, learning through discussion and watching fast paced demonstrations are all ways that pupils say they like to learn. Good quality resources, such as writing frames, or word banks, support the learning of different ability groups and allow pupils to succeed with their tasks by working independently, at their own pace. This develops their confidence, self-esteem and enthusiasm to tackle new challenges. In most lessons teachers share learning objectives with pupils, but these are not always used well enough to help pupils to measure how well they have progressed in their lessons. Teachers' marking is not consistent and too often does not give clear advice on how to improve. Inaccuracies in assessment have meant that some pupils are not given the right level of challenge or support so their learning is not as good as that of others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. There is effective planning to develop basic skills for the majority of pupils. Curriculum planning for pupils of different abilities is consistently good in Key Stage 2. Information and communication technology is well used to enhance pupils' learning. A good programme of personal social and health education prepares pupils well to lead healthy, safe lives and build good relationships. The enrichment of learning through visits, visitors and special themed days, such as World Book Day, is a strength of the curriculum. Pupils relish the opportunities provided by these events as well as the many after-school clubs which develop special interests or talents. The school's links with external agencies, other schools and community providers are excellent. They ensure that pupils' specific needs are met, special talents are developed and that all pupils have access to the whole curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall, with excellent levels of pastoral care and support for children and families. Impressive use is made of external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and to provide training for staff. For example, arrangements to ensure pupils are kept safe and well cared for are meticulous. Staff have a detailed knowledge of pupils and their needs. They give freely of their time to support and nurture pupils at lunchtime and after school. Consequently, pupils and their families have enormous trust in staff. Parents comments such as, 'excellent support and encouragement', and 'caring, safe environment' reflect their high opinion of the school. The school's additional provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities through links with external agencies is outstanding, because in

one parent's view, 'they leave no stone unturned'. By Year 6 these pupils usually exceed the standards reached by their peers nationally.

Staff know each pupil very well and ensure that effective support results in the pupils making good progress. New assessment procedures however are not yet embedded across the school. The good practice that exists is not yet being shared for the benefit of all pupils. This means that the rigour in tracking pupils' progress and identifying underachieving pupils quickly is not as sharp as they might be. Senior managers recognise this, but have not had enough opportunity to monitor the impact of the new procedures.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Under the very good leadership of the headteacher the school has improved well since the last inspection. Pupils' personal development has improved to outstanding and standards by the end of Year 6 have risen well. The headteacher involves all staff in contributing to school improvement and this has had a very beneficial affect on the provision for pastoral care and support. Good teamwork and a shared understanding of the school's aims contribute well to the school's development.

The secondment of the headteacher to a neighbouring school has reduced the capacity of the senior leadership team in the current year. Nevertheless, the school's self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows how to improve. Although the senior team has worked hard and has been led by the deputy headteacher, senior staff have not had time to monitor the work of the school as regularly as previously. This has caused the school's progress to slow slightly. For example, new assessment arrangements have not been monitored yet to evaluate how well they are working, nor have senior staff had time to develop methods of recording assessment information so that they can use data efficiently to spot any underachievement quickly. Governors have been very supportive of the school during this period and they are well informed about its work.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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

7 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John Bosco Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sunderland, SR5 4JW

I am writing to tell you why Mrs Rodgers and I think St John Bosco is a good school and to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited you recently. It was a great pleasure for us to see how well you all work together. From the Nursery up to Year 6 we could see that you enjoy school and work hard. That is why you do well in your learning and make good progress. No wonder your teachers and your families are so proud of you. Your behaviour is excellent. This makes a big contribution to how well you learn because your classrooms are happy and safe places that the staff have made bright and exciting with your lovely work. Your school prepares you well for the future and teaches you how to be good citizens by giving you responsibility, which you all enjoy and take seriously. We were delighted to know how much you raise for charities and how well the school council organises fund-raising event and improvements to the playground. Well done for getting help from local businesses so you can make even more improvements. We think that taken all together your personal qualities, including caring for others and showing respect and kindness, are outstanding.

We think that you are well taught and that your teachers plan some interesting activities and visits to make your learning even more fun. It was good to hear that sometimes learning is so much fun you don't even realise you are learning - it just seems to happen! You told us the teachers made you feel safe and happy in school and we think this is because they take exceptionally good care of you and listen to any concerns you have.

Even though your school is a good one, we know your headteacher and teachers want it to get better still. We have asked for changes to a few things that might help to do this. One is to help you to improve your writing by giving you ideas for how to make your work even better. Another is to make sure that everyone gets work that helps them to make good progress in all lessons. The last one is for the school to check how well things are going so that any good ideas are shared around to help everyone improve. You can help with all of this by continuing to work hard and care for each other as well as you do now.

We send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector