

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Norton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111684
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	310661
Inspection date	8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Chris Penter

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	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Walker
Headteacher	Miss Mary Tate
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	Ragworth Road Norton Stockton-on-Tees TS20 1HR
Telephone number	01642 360401
Fax number	01642 557369

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, with particular reference to the achievement of lower ability pupils, teaching and learning, the care and guidance given to pupils, quality of the curriculum and effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, scrutiny of assessment data, documentation, including parental questionnaires, the school's self-evaluation and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a larger than average sized primary school which serves a socially and economically mixed area. Fewer pupils than is usual are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A lower than average proportion of pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and fewer than usual have a statement of special educational needs. The school holds a Basic Skills Award, Artsmark Gold and the Sportsmark.

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 good school. Some aspects of provision are outstanding. In particular these are the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, the innovative and engaging curriculum and the quality of care and guidance provided. The inspection judgements closely match the school's own evaluation of its performance, confirming that internal monitoring and evaluation procedures are effective. Priorities are appropriate and development planning is robust, indicating good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money. Most parents have a very positive view of the school and it is described as 'a happy school which sets high standards and is conducive to learning'. A minority of parents are concerned that the school fails to communicate with them effectively or take account of their views.

Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average and pupils achieve well. On entry into Year 1 pupils' attainment is higher than might be expected in most areas of learning. Over time, progress at Key Stage 1 has been good and the standards reached by the end of Year 2 have been consistently above national averages. A dip in 2007 was due in the main to the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in that cohort. Pupils also make good progress in Key Stage 2 and standards in Year 6 have also been consistently above national averages overall, but closer to the average for the number of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age. A dip in attainment in 2007 can be ascribed to the poor performance of a very small number of pupils. Most pupils with learning difficulties and/disabilities make good progress because they are effectively supported by teachers and teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was never less than good and in some instances outstanding. Lessons are well planned and teachers plan together to ensure consistency and to share best practice. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and progress carefully tracked. This information is used very effectively to set challenging but appropriate targets for individual pupils and to provide additional support for those making less than expected progress. Teachers provide very clear guidance to pupils on how they might improve as well as giving appropriate praise and encouragement. Systems are in place to enable pupils to evaluate their own progress and set their own targets. They are also encouraged to critically appraise the work of others. Well trained and deployed teaching assistants guide and support those pupils who need additional help or extra challenge. Pupils enjoy their lessons and very much appreciate the knowledge and enthusiasm of their teachers. They participate well in lessons and join in the wide range of learning opportunities available with confidence and enthusiasm. In the very best lessons pupils are given good opportunities for research, and to develop as independent learners, but this is not always the case. Whilst interactive whiteboards are well used by teachers to enhance learning, other information and communications technology (ICT) provision is insufficient to develop the broad range of ICT skills required of pupils.

The innovative curriculum is outstanding and another important factor underpinning good progress and achievement. The pupils are allowed some influence over the way in which the curriculum develops and it is highly effective in meeting their needs. An emphasis is placed on critical thinking, debating and philosophising. A cross-curricular approach emphasises creativity and assists in the development of social skills, practical skills and individual talents as well as academic skills. Because the curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities and approaches it provides well for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are gifted and talented. The school recognises that some children can be both. A lack of resources is

impeding the further development of the ICT curriculum. The curriculum is effectively enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities, links with local schools and sporting clubs and regular trips and residential visits. Frequent themed weeks give pupils opportunities to meet people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds and to reflect on lives which are different from their own.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding; this is well supported by the school's strong Christian values, thoughtful assemblies, opportunities for prayer and reflection and powerful displays. Pupils enjoy their education and are happy and confident learners who talk in a very positive way about their school. Behaviour both within the classroom and outside is exemplary. Pupils get on well with each other and with their teachers. Older pupils support the younger ones as 'playground buddies' and act as monitors and librarians. The school council makes sure that pupils' views are known and taken into account. For example, they were able to influence a change to the timing of playtime. Attendance is average. Meticulous attention is given to care and support. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place and well understood by all staff. Pupils say they feel safe in school, are unaware of any bullying and know who to go to if upset or in trouble. Healthy lifestyles are given a high priority by the school and pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe, eat well and exercise properly. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through charity fundraising, for example for a school in Ghana, and participation in local events. They are well prepared for the future because of their good level of basic skills, opportunities to undertake responsibilities and active citizenship.

Leadership and management are good. Since her appointment, the headteacher has taken the opportunity to restructure the staff and devolve more responsibility to others, particularly subject leaders. This change has been effectively supported by targeted training and has added significant strength to school leadership. The headteacher has a clear vision for a happy, inclusive and successful school. She provides good leadership and has the confidence and respect of staff and governors. The school knows itself well, has appropriate priorities for improvement and plans effectively. Issues raised at the last inspection have been effectively resolved. All the staff work together as a team and share a strong commitment to providing the best opportunities they can for pupils. Governance is good. Governors have a secure overview of the strengths and areas for development in the school, are active in monitoring its work and are developing their role as a critical friend.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

On entry to the Nursery, children exhibit a broad range of skills. In recent years baseline data indicates there has been a decline in capability within communication language and literacy aspects of the curriculum. Overall, attainment on entry is typical for their age group. As a result of careful planning, good teaching, and a rich and stimulating curriculum, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage to exceed the level expected of them by the end of Reception. Staff carefully plan the next step for each child, building effectively upon what has already been learnt. Behaviour is excellent. Children work together well and clearly enjoy the wide range of activities they engage in. Classrooms are bright and well organised and displays are of an exceptionally high standard. There is a good balance between teacher-led activities, group work and independent learning and there is already evidence that children are developing critical thinking skills. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good. Facilities for outdoor learning

could be improved. There is a shortage of soft play space and the area is exposed to the elements making its use impractical in poor weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve resources for ICT to better support the development of ICT skills and usage across the curriculum.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners.
- Improve the outdoor classroom for children in the Foundation Stage to allow for more regular and purposeful use.

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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	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 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	1
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?	1
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.

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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Norton,
Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 1HR

Thank you for the very warm and enthusiastic welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I was surprised that so many of you knew my name. I really enjoyed my day at St Joseph's and very much appreciated the help you gave me and the things you told me about your school. Particular thanks to the members of the school council who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to me.

St Joseph's is a good school. Some of the things which make it so are your excellent behaviour both in lessons and around the school, the way in which you try to do your very best and work hard in lessons, and the way in which you help each other. Yours is a friendly school where people get on well together. You have bright and interesting classrooms and your teachers make lessons interesting and exciting. Because of all these things you make good progress in your learning and get good results.

You feel safe and well cared for in school and its good to know that bullying is very rare and you all know that there is someone to go to if you are worried or upset by anything. You know quite a lot about how to stay safe and keep healthy and were keen to tell me about healthy diets and the importance of exercise. Some of you take responsibilities in school as 'buddies' or monitors and you are keen to help others through charity events. This shows you care about other people.

You say you enjoy using computers but that there are not enough for you to be able to use them regularly. The school is going to see if they can get more and also if they can improve the outdoor area for the Foundation Stage. Teachers also want to give you more opportunities to find things out for yourself.

Thank you once again for a really interesting day. Good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Penter

Lead inspector