

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

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114264
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311537
Inspection dates	31 January –1 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Shepherd

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	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Quinn
Headteacher	Mrs Stefa McManners
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Victoria Lane Coundon Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 8NN
Telephone number	01388 602608
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Joseph's RC Primary School serves the village of Coundon and the surrounding area. Many pupils come from areas of significant social and economic deprivation. There is a much higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The movement of pupils in and out of the school during the year is higher than usual. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, including some Traveller families, and of these a few have English as an additional language.

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, which parents appreciate. Pupils build systematically on their good start in Reception and achieve well through the school. This is due to the consistently good teaching and learning, and the stimulating curriculum. Children begin school with standards that are below those typical for their age. By the time they begin Year 1, many pupils have reached the expected levels. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been consistently above average until last year when standards fell. This was because nearly three quarters of pupils had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards in writing are consistently higher than reading or mathematics in Key Stage 1 because staff place considerable emphasis on technical skills. Although pupils continue to achieve well in Key Stage 2, standards are broadly average by Year 6. This is due to the negative impact of the movement of pupils in and out of the school. In some year groups, only a third of pupils who were in the school from the beginning of Year 3 are still there by the end of Year 6. The high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also has an impact on standards overall. These pupils make good progress in relation to their targets. This is due to the very detailed individual education plans and the effective leadership and management of this aspect of the school's work. The school deploys support staff well and they work effectively with their class teachers. This has a beneficial effect on all pupils' progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school uses its small size to advantage. Staff know the pupils well and this results in good care, support and guidance, with pupils enjoying their learning. Personal guidance is good, but academic guidance is not as effective and many pupils are unsure of their individual improvement targets. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, resulting in good behaviour. Attendance rates are average. Pupils have a good understanding of staying safe and healthy. They enjoy taking regular exercise but are not so good at eating enough healthy foods. Pupils develop some good skills to prepare for their future lives, such as working in teams and decision-making but when the level of their basic skills is taken into account, this preparation is satisfactory overall. A key strength of the school is its links with the local and regional community; pupils' contributions to the community are outstanding.

Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers set a clear educational direction for future improvements. Staff with coordinating roles work very well together to improve provision systematically. This gives the school a good capacity to improve in future. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and leads to good achievement for pupils from all backgrounds and with every kind of need. Staff know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well but the self-evaluation processes and data-handling systems are not efficient enough. Governance is satisfactory and governors are keen to extend their roles. The school has made a good level of improvement since the previous inspection and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to their learning in Reception because the teaching team work very effectively together to meet individual needs. The systematic planning of the curriculum results in good progress across the different aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff have high expectations of children's personal development and set very good role models. This results in children developing a good range of personal skills, which are particularly effective for developing independence. Care, support and guidance are good and ensure that children

feel safe and secure. Leadership and management are good. Staff work hard to promote good quality learning in the outdoor area, but the physical environment is not wholly suited to its purpose.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the effectiveness of the self-evaluation processes and the systems for tracking pupils' progress over time.
- Strengthen pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are average. Children enter Reception with standards that are below those typical for their age and with a wide range of ability. They achieve well and by the time they begin Year 1 many children have reached the expected levels. All pupils, including pupils with English as an additional language, continue to make good progress through the rest of the school. The national assessments show that standards have been consistently above average by the end of Year 2. They dipped in 2007 because three quarters of the class had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Progress and standards in writing are particularly good in this key stage because of the careful balance across the different elements of writing, with a particular emphasis on technical skills. In Key Stage 2, the high levels of pupils moving in and out of the school adversely affect standards by Year 6. National tests show that standards are broadly average and the inspection confirms these standards. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs also influences standards. Detailed individual education plans and the support of staff who know their different needs well ensure that these pupils make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and settle well to their work in lessons. Attendance rates are satisfactory. They have a good understanding of keeping safe, particularly when crossing roads. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are respectful when saying their prayers. Pupils understand what constitutes a healthy life. They enjoy taking exercise and explain the importance of a balanced diet but they are not as good in carrying this out themselves. Behaviour is good. Several pupils have behavioural difficulties and/or disabilities, but the school has good systems in place to support individuals and staff work hard to support them. Pupils' preparation for future life is satisfactory; they are well prepared in skills such as cooperating and leading teams, but do not have strong literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils show outstanding personal development in contributing to the life of the community because the school sets a high value on such contributions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers work well with support assistants to meet the needs of individuals. This is particularly effective in extending the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers use computers well in lessons to sustain learning. For

example, pupils were fascinated by a sequence depicting the snow-filled world of Narnia when carrying out some writing. Marking is good and gives clear points for future improvements in their written work. However, it does not refer enough to pupils' learning targets. For example, pupils do not appreciate that using full stops and question marks is part of what they need to do for the next National Curriculum level. Teachers manage behaviour well and this ensures that pupils concentrate on their learning. The quality of teaching at the end of lessons is inconsistent. In some lessons, the conclusion is a lively and challenging session which reinforces key learning well; in others, there is too little time given to whole class discussion.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Teachers provide a well balanced programme of work across different subjects. Pupils benefit from a rich cultural programme, which supports their learning in the arts well. For example, pupils take part in dance or drama productions in large local venues. The curriculum matches pupils' needs and interests well, and there are very interesting projects that reflect the key features of the village, such as its rich cultural history. There is a systematic programme for personal development and, by Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of the importance of aspects such as tolerance and friendship. There are some opportunities for developing literacy and numeracy in other subjects but, in some classes, there are too many worksheets that restrict the development of these skills. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well structured. There are good levels of enrichment to extend pupils' experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school works successfully to care for and support its pupils. Staff use the small size of the school to advantage and there is a shared responsibility for individuals. The long-term members of staff know many of the families well helping them to give suitable support to them and their children. Systems to support and guide pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very effective and result in their good achievement. The school organises behaviour management systems well. It makes very good use of outside expertise to support individuals' needs and combines this effectively with their own specialists' work. Safeguarding systems are in place and pupils say that they feel safe. Pupils receive good quality guidance for their personal development but this is not as consistent for academic guidance. The different systems throughout the school leave many pupils unsure of their own particular targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Their clear sense of direction focuses on the inclusion of all pupils in learning and the use of the local and regional setting to extend pupils' personal and academic development. Teachers with coordinating responsibilities make good use of the small size of the school to communicate with each other and to take their subjects forward, despite having more than one area of responsibility. They have made systematic and effective improvements to the provision. This gives the school a good capacity for future improvement. The leadership and management for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly effective. The school understands its strengths and weaknesses but the

self-evaluation processes and the systems for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school are not efficient as they could be. This results, for example, in staff taking longer than needed in analysing data. The school organises its resources very well, particularly the deployment of staff. This has a significantly positive impact on pupils' progress in lessons. Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the school's context well and are keen to extend their roles.

es. You know how to keep safe and healthy, but you don't all try to eat your five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Your school provides outstanding opportunities for you to contribute to the community and you told me how much you enjoy your visits out of school and the visitors who work with you. Your staff and governors are going to all work together to keep a closer eye on how well the school is developing and how good your progress is in your work.

I will remember my time with you and I wish you every success in your future education.

Yours sincerely,

Maggi Shepherd

Lead inspector

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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	3
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	1
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?	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	3
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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 February 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Coundon, Durham,
DL14 8NN

Thank you for the warm welcome I received when I visited your school. I really enjoyed the two days I spent with you and only wished I had more time to see all the interesting things you are doing.

You receive a good education at St Joseph's School. You make a good start in Reception, where the staff work well together to give you interesting activities to help you to learn. I really enjoyed the gingerbread person you gave me which you had decorated. Although a lot of you have learning difficulties, you all make good progress as you move through the school. Your staff work hard to help you in lessons, particularly when you are working in small groups. Some of you know what you need to do to improve and I have asked your teachers to make sure all of you clearly understand what you need to do to learn even better. You can do your best to remember how to do this when you are carrying out your work.

You are well looked after. Your behaviour is good and you enjoy coming to school to learn. You work well together in teams. I saw this when the oldest pupils organised most of the assembly themselves. You know how to keep safe and healthy, but you don't all try to eat your five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Your school provides outstanding opportunities for you to contribute to the community and you told me how much you enjoy your visits out of school and the visitors who work with you. Your staff and governors are going to all work together to keep a closer eye on how well the school is developing and how good your progress is in your work.

I will remember my time with you and I wish you every success in your future education.

Yours sincerely,

Maggi Shepherd

Lead inspector