

# St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Blackhall

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114280
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	311547
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graeme Clarke

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Fr Malcolm Cairns
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen McDaid
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Coast Road Blackhall Colliery Hartlepool TS27 4HE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5864308
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5864467

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage;
- the progress pupils are currently making, in writing especially;
- the range of evidence available to show the extent of pupils' personal development and well-being.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. However, the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations; looking at pupils' work; assessment information; documents including the school's self-evaluation; and interviews and discussions with staff, a governor and pupils.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average size primary school serves mainly Roman Catholic families in the coastal area of south-east Durham. Although a below average proportion of pupils take free school meals, the locality is disadvantaged in terms of its socio-economic character. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average although an above average number have a statement for special educational need. Almost all pupils have a White British heritage and none are learning English as an additional language. The school has the Activemark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy Schools and International School Status awards.

## 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 where children thrive. Under the very effective leadership of the headteacher, the staff team very successfully fosters a Christian caring ethos and a philosophy that every child does matter. In this inclusive school children's accomplishments reflect good achievement and personal development. The governors, headteacher and staff are single minded in wanting all pupils to develop and learn as well as they can and very fruitfully foster partnerships with parents to meet this goal. In turn, parents hold the care and education the school provides in exceptionally high regard. One parent's comment sums up their views, 'My son is progressing at an excellent pace and I do think this is due to the teaching staff. I am also very comfortable in approaching the members of staff with any queries or concerns I may have.'

Progress from Year 1 to 6 is good. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average but vary year on year because of the small size of the year groups. In 2007, the results of Year 2 assessments improved markedly when, from a broadly average beginning, pupils reached significantly above average standards. They were the highest ever in reading. Taking into account their backgrounds and relatively low starting points when Year 6 pupils began in Key Stage 2, most achieved well in the 2007 national tests in mathematics, and science, but less well in English. Standards were close to average overall but below in English where writing is a weakness. Very effective support ensures pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do better than their counterparts elsewhere. The school diligently analyses pupils' results and accurately identifies that raising writing standards is its top priority. The new approach to teaching writing is beginning to pay dividends. This carefully managed and assessed approach throughout the school is especially successful in Year 2, and many older pupils are also starting to make clear progress. The school recognises the next step is to widen the scope of the initiative to include written work in other subjects.

Excellent displays of pupils' work around the school reflect how pupils' good academic and personal development results from an effective combination of good teaching, a rich variety of experience during the day and after school, and an exceptionally high level of pastoral care and support. The school fosters outstandingly effective partnerships with parents, the Church, the local authority, and neighbouring and overseas schools. These complement lessons and play a vital part in widening pupils' learning, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils conduct themselves well, acting safely and sensibly both in classrooms and in the communal parts of the school. They enjoy school life and the friendships they make. Their positive outlook, care for each other, confidence, and courtesy towards adults all reflect how well the school successfully helps them develop these attributes. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of good health and fitness: they take part energetically in the morning 'wake-up' aerobics session, in physical education and voluntarily sports activities. They make an especially important and enthusiastic contribution to enhance life in their school and the local community. Their support for other pupils through their school council, peer mentoring system, buddy and playground leader organisation is particularly notable. They promote charitable work to help worthy causes. Pupils' strongly developed social and broadly average basic skills and their awareness of enterprise and business prepare them well for their future.

Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and share the purpose of their lessons with pupils. Pupils work industriously at the interesting and challenging activities which teachers provide. Carefully planned and skilful support ensures gifted and talented pupils, and those

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all take a full part in lessons and, in turn, many learn well and make good progress. Pupils' work is rigorously assessed each term and a detailed record of their progress is thoroughly analysed to identify anyone at risk of falling behind. Teachers meticulously set challenging targets for all pupils. They are eager to raise standards and have taken on board the new approaches to teaching writing. Teachers' marking congratulates pupils on their accomplishments and very helpfully gives them specific pointers to improve those aspects of their work needed to meet targets and aspire to higher standards.

The headteacher and governors work closely together to ensure the school is well led and managed and give excellent direction to the staff team. The governors and leadership team review the school's work thoroughly and have an accurate perspective of its strengths and areas for improvement. Their action planning, to address priorities, incorporates appropriate activities. Governors ensure they meet all their responsibilities and current government requirements. For example, pastoral care is exemplary and arrangements to safeguard the welfare of pupils are in place. Governors check that the school gets good value from their resources to ensure good academic achievement and personal development. They have successfully addressed issues from the last inspection. Given their track record of improving standards and achievement in Key Stage 1 and a successful beginning to improve writing throughout the school, the governors' and headteacher's ambition to raise standards further is within reach. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children join the Reception class with a range of skills which, for many, are well below those typical for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Parents of new starters are delighted with the way their children enjoy school. Children become thoroughly involved when working in groups or individually. They contribute enthusiastically in class activities although some do not follow classroom routines as well as they might. Children thrive and make good progress because teaching is good. They make particularly good progress in their personal development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Successful teaching of letters and their sounds helps the children to make good progress in communication, language and literacy development although their skills, especially in writing, are below those typical of many children of this age. By the time they leave the Reception class, their overall skills and abilities vary, but many children are at the level expected for their age. They are well placed to move on to Year 1.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Consolidate approaches to raise achievement and standards, especially in writing.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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



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**Annex B**

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Blackhall, Durham,  
TS27 4HE

I really enjoyed my visit to your school this week. Thank you for helping me when I came into your classrooms to see you at work. I did enjoy talking with those of you whom I met. You were very well behaved, exceptionally polite and really helpful. I was pleased to see how confident you are, how much you enjoy coming to school and taking part in all the different activities, and how you value the friendships you make. I was impressed with the many ways you contribute to school life. I know the headteacher and all the staff are rightly very proud of you.

Yours is a good school. It is very warm and welcoming and very well organised. I know that you feel safe and happy because all the adults in the school look after you really well. Your lessons are good. I was especially pleased with the way you work hard and like to take part in lessons and other school activities. Last year those of you in the Reception class did well, and those of you who were in Year 2 also did well, especially with reading. Also, last year most pupils who were in Year 6 did well in the tests everyone has to take in mathematics and science, but they did not do so well in English because their written work was not as good as it should have been. The new approach to teaching writing and the way teachers mark your work, are designed to help you improve your written work. I have asked the school to help you to do even better by including the writing you do in other subjects, such as science, history and geography.

You have very many opportunities at St Joseph's Primary School to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector