

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

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108383
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	324758
Inspection date	21 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Joe Clark

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	171
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Adrian Dixon
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Donnelly
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Prince Consort Road Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE8 1LR
Telephone number	0191 4901517
Fax number	0191 4901527

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well higher attaining pupils do, particularly in mathematics
- whether pupils' personal development is outstanding
- how effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Evidence was gathered from discussions with senior leaders, teachers, pupils and governors. Parents' views as reflected in the Ofsted questionnaire were considered. Lessons were sampled and documentation scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors 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.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and nearly all speak English as their first language. Most pupils come from areas of high social deprivation. A greater proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals than is found nationally. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

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. Some of its provision is outstanding. In their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire parents were very clear about what they like about the school. These are typified by comments such, 'A friendly, caring and supportive ethos' and 'A fantastic school with a fantastic head' and 'The school provides an excellent standard of care and education'. This confidence is not misplaced and is supported by inspection findings.

The school deliberately places great emphasis on pupils' personal development, which is outstanding. Pupils have exceptionally good attitudes to learning and they show immense enjoyment of school. This is shown in pupils' attendance, which is above average with no unauthorised absence. Behaviour is excellent, both in lessons and around the school, and there have been no exclusions for several years. Pupils are confident, friendly, easy to talk to and very open. They say there is no bullying and that everyone gets on well together. Just in case, at break and during lunchtimes, older pupils very responsibly act as 'playground buddies' to younger pupils to help provide support and reassurance. In assemblies, pupils take opportunities for reflection seriously and pray willingly and thoughtfully. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Relationships are excellent throughout the school reflecting the school's strong Christian values. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle which is reflected in the school's achievement of a Healthy School Award. Pupils know how to stay safe, including Internet safety. They make a good contribution to the life of the school and enjoy taking on responsibility, for example, as school councillors or librarians, but say they would welcome more opportunities to exercise leadership. Community cohesion is good. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the local community, not only the parish community, but through, for example, involvement in Citizenship ceremonies in the Civic Centre and performing at large local concert venues. A link with a primary school in Cameroon provides pupils with an insight into a culture vastly different from their own. Pupils' excellent social skills and good achievement ensure their preparation for the next stage of learning is excellent.

Pupils say they feel safe in school, which is unsurprising as the school has excellent systems of pastoral care. Pupils say they like the fact that the headteacher knows them well as individuals and can be confided in during times of personal difficulty. Links with outside agencies, for example, in supporting vulnerable pupils or pupils at an early stage of learning English, are excellent, as are transitional links with the local high school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support through planned intervention programmes to help improve basic skills. Academic guidance is good. Pupils know what their curriculum targets are because of excellent systems of assessment. They know what they have to do to improve their work and reach a higher standard.

When pupils join the Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS) they are generally at levels of development significantly below those typical for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are usually just above average and achievement is good. The school's 2007 national tests results at the end of Key Stage 2, reflect these standards. They were above average in English and mathematics but average in science because fewer pupils reached the higher Level 5 in that subject. Given their starting points, achievement for this cohort of pupils was good, as it had been for the cohorts of 2005 and 2006. A significant minority of lower attaining pupils joined the 2008 Year 6 cohort during their last two years in the school. Consequently provisional test results in 2008 fell from 2007 levels. Evidence from the inspection

indicates that pupils throughout the school, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are currently making good progress.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teaching is characterised by careful planning to provide interesting and varied activities. In most lessons, there is planned challenge for different ability groups in the class. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A good curriculum supports learning well and there is some additional support for able, gifted and talented pupils. However, higher attaining pupils are not always individually identified and given appropriate extension work in lessons. In particular, there is not enough planned support to help them achieve the higher level grades in science at the end of Year 6. Local and international links with other schools help broaden and enrich the curriculum. Enrichment activities and extra-curricular opportunities are good, both before and after school, for example, through the breakfast and teatime clubs. Good use is made of the city learning centres in supporting the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum.

This is a successful school because it is well led and managed and provides good value for money. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She has successfully promoted a common sense of purpose among the staff, teaching and non-teaching, resulting in pupils' outstanding personal development and good achievement. School targets are regularly met. Tracking systems are effective in identifying underachievement leading to appropriate intervention strategies. Systems of self-evaluation are accurate, giving the school good capacity for further improvement. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Governance is good; governors provide appropriate levels of support and challenge and have good links with curriculum areas. Safeguarding arrangements are secure. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive, particularly of the headteacher whose accessibility in the yard before and after school was favourably commented on by several parents.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with skills which are very low compared with those typical for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy and calculation. They settle very quickly, enjoy school and form good relationships with adults and other children. Children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, because of the way the adults manage the provision and their learning. Good use is made of the indoor facilities, and this foster children's development in all areas of learning. Outdoor provision is developing but does not yet reflect all areas of the EYFS curriculum. Access to the outdoor area is too limited so children are unable to choose to learn outside as well as inside. Despite good overall progress, by the end of the EYFS, the majority of children remain below the expected level for their age. Children are well cared for and good systems are in place to ensure they are safe and secure. They understand how to keep themselves safe and are encouraged to adopt healthy eating habits. Children develop a good understanding of the wider world through creative use of play and are actively encouraged to solve problems. Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good features. The recently appointed leader has a clear agenda for developing the EYFS and is being well supported in this process by senior managers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science at the end of Key Stage 2, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

- Develop the EYFS outdoor provision to reflect all areas of the curriculum.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

24 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Gateshead. NE8 1LR

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We really appreciated the help you gave us and the interesting and exciting things you told us about your school. We found you open, friendly and exceptionally polite and well mannered. You told us there was no bullying in school and how everyone gets on well together.

Yours is a good school with much that is outstanding. You make a superb contribution to the school with your excellent attitudes and behaviour, not to mention your good attendance. This, along with good teaching, is helping you learn well and make good progress. The standards you reach at the end of Year 6 are usually above average and your achievement is good. Keep up the good attendance for it makes such a difference to how well you succeed in later life.

There is a good range of activities before and after school which you said you enjoyed and appreciated. You also make an excellent contribution to the school and local community. Your parents have great confidence in the school and think it is doing a great job.

Of course, none of this would be possible were it not for the good leadership and management of the school. You told us Mrs Donnelly is brilliant and knows every one of you personally – and most of your parents and carers too! Together with the other teachers and adults she takes excellent care of you.

So well done and keep up the good work. Maintain those high standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 but don't forget how important science is to your future success. We think you could achieve higher standards in science by the end of Year 6 and have asked the school to help you to do this. We have also asked that more use is made of the outdoor area for children in Reception.

Thank you once again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joe Clark

Lead inspector