

St Paul's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111677
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	325427
Inspection date	27 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan Elton

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	237
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	Prof Peter Kelly
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Connelly
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wolviston Mill Lane Billingham TS22 5LU
Telephone number	01642 360022
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- Are Year 2 and Year 6 pupils on track to meet their targets and are the vast majority of pupils in other year groups making good progress?
- Does exemplary care, guidance and support result in excellent personal development?
- Does the school's provision result in high rates of achievement for all groups of pupils?

Evidence was collected from the school's self-evaluation document, national published assessment data, the school's records and procedures, observation of the school at work, parental questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's assessments as given in its self-evaluation were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school, where the overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British origin. It serves a wide geographical area, which although mixed, has few signs of social and economic hardship and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Only a very small percentage of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. No pupil is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, which comprises a Nursery and Reception, and a unit for Stockton local authority pupils who have moderate learning difficulties and complex behavioural needs.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It has many excellent features and pupils thrive in its warm and supportive ethos. It richly deserves the many accolades it receives from parents and carers. As one parent writes, 'This is an outstanding school, with exceptional leadership, pastoral care and educational excellence.' Many comment on the very supportive staff, who always listen to pupils, taking appropriate action in response to the concerns they raise. Parents appreciate that staff give of their own time to weekend and after-school events. As another parent comments: 'This stands out as a beacon school. It is an example of how a school can be both Catholic and catholic!'

Pupils make outstanding progress, and their achievement is excellent. When children begin Nursery, they have typical skills for this age group. They enter Year 1, above average and continue making good progress to the end of Year 2, when they reach well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, with increasing numbers reaching the higher levels. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 are consistently much higher than average. At the end of Year 6, current pupils are on track to reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science, with many more able pupils reaching the higher levels. These high standards were reflected in the unvalidated results of the 2008 national tests which were significantly above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make comparable progress to their peers because of the high quality provision to meet their individual needs. This reflects the pattern of national assessment results since 2006 and therefore represents excellent achievement.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. One parent comments 'pupils are polite, motivated and have a keen sense of their place in the world'. Pupils are nurtured in a strong Christian community. They show great respect for themselves, for staff and other pupils and have strong compassion for those less fortunate than themselves. Behaviour is exceptional. Pupils are eager to learn and their obvious enjoyment of school life is seen in their above average attendance. The school has strong links with the parish community and, through the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), has raised money to support children and their families abroad. Pupils enjoy responsibilities such as modelling 'Wake up and shake up', organising equipment and caring for the school environment. They learn real-life skills through publishing the school's own newspaper, organising talent shows and attending governors' meetings. Pupils have very active lifestyles and enjoy a good range of after-school sports clubs. These complement a highly sensible approach to diet and an understanding of the human body. Most pupils are ambitious and want to achieve. Transitional arrangements to secondary school are very well organised and pupils leave with highly effective basic skills, an ability to cooperate with others and plenty of interesting experiences on which they can confidently draw.

Provision for teaching, learning and the curriculum is excellent. Staff are well trained in managing pupils' behaviour and establish very effective relationships with all their pupils. As a result, pupils are relaxed about volunteering in class and making mistakes. Staff have excellent classroom management skills and devise interesting and fun activities to extend learning. They give clear explanations and use a variety of strategies to sustain concentration. As a result, lessons have brisk pace and basic skills are very well consolidated. The school has good marking procedures in place but sometimes these are inconsistently applied, so that on occasions pupils do not know how to improve their work and opportunities to extend learning are therefore

missed. The curriculum is exciting, well-balanced and highly relevant. It gives due priority to mathematics and English and extends these imaginatively across the curriculum. Pupils enjoy many practical opportunities in science, design and technology, art and craft. They test against predictions and explain results clearly in technical terms. Pupils have very good computer skills because they engage in research and have opportunities to present cross-curricular information. Projects linking subjects appeal to pupils' interests, such as one on fairground rides in 'Thrills and Spills', but they also contain sufficient depth to sustain pupils' interest into follow-up activities. The introduction of French is very popular while visits, visitors and the specialist teaching of music, add much additional variety.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support because systems and procedures to protect and safeguard pupils are securely in place and regularly updated. Staff are knowledgeable and trained well in protecting pupils. They are also skilled in helping pupils to share and discuss any worries and pupils feel confident in approaching them with problems. Staff use the school's tracking system very efficiently to monitor pupils' progress and identify individuals and groups of learners with particular needs. This has resulted in better-targeted resources for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as appropriate alternative opportunities for the more able pupils.

This is a very well run school because leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher sets a clear direction and has effectively dealt with improvements required since the last inspection and encourages all staff to share and develop their interests and expertise for the benefit of the school. The management structure works particularly well to secure curricular progression and eliminate teaching inconsistencies. Governors are very well informed. They share the staff's commitment to raising achievement and very effectively contribute to the school's self-evaluation process. The leadership and management team have a clear view of how they would like the school to develop and have an excellent capacity to make further progress. They have made a good contribution to community cohesion by the provision of extended school facilities, their excellent links with outside agencies, their work for charities and their celebration of pupils' cultures within the school. Currently, the school provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

This is good and has some outstanding features. Most children enter Nursery with skills broadly typical of this age group in all areas of learning. Children make good progress and, by the end of Reception, they achieve above average standards. This good achievement is due to clear routines, high expectations, good teaching and sensitive support. All children achieve exceptionally well in their personal development, but in early writing girls achieve better than boys. The school has responded effectively to this issue and now provides a phonics programme and improved writing opportunities. Space is used well indoors and offers exciting places to learn, such as operating a space ship or working as travel agents. Children use computers confidently and enjoy learning French. The outdoor environment provides a wealth of opportunities for children to explore, such as nurturing seedlings, investigations and riding wheeled toys. Nevertheless, although there is a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities, there is not a good balance between indoor and outdoor learning, as children have fewer opportunities to extend their learning outside. Adult-led activities are well planned because of accurate observational assessment. These motivate children to concentrate very well because of small group organisation. This accelerates their progress. Behaviour and attitudes

to learning are very good. Children become more independent and learn to care for their environment. They feel safe because staff are vigilant and standards of care are exemplary. Leadership and management are good: effective relationships with parents are fostered and there is a clear vision for future development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend outdoor learning opportunities for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Ensure the school's marking procedures are consistently applied across the school so that pupils can respond to teachers' comments.

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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?	1
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	1

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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1
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?	1
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

28 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS22 5LU

Thank you for your welcome when my colleague and I visited your school for the recent inspection. You attend an outstanding school. It has many excellent features. No wonder you speak so enthusiastically about it. Your parents and carers were equally enthusiastic. Their written comments were very helpful; please thank them on my behalf.

Most of you are making outstanding progress. I saw this when I looked at the school's progress tracker and when I compared your work in September with what you do now. Your writing has made a lot of improvement, both in its quality and the amount you write. You are also acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be effective citizens of the future. You have an excellent understanding of the essential features of a healthy lifestyle, enjoy responsibility and express your opinions clearly and confidently. Your behaviour is excellent. You receive some excellent teaching. Your teachers explain your work very clearly and sustain your interest and concentration throughout the lessons. They ensure you understand very well and keep revising until you remember. Some of the activities they devise are such fun. I also had a good look at your topic books; they were very interesting. You study some exciting projects in depth and do a lot of practical work. Your teachers take excellent care of you.

I have asked your school to make two improvements:

- to make sure children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have more opportunities for outdoor learning
- to make sure that when teachers mark your work they make it clear to you how to make your work better and ensure that you have time to do this.

Your headteacher, staff and governors have been very successful since the last inspection and are determined that the school makes further progress.

My very best wishes to you and your families!

Yours faithfully

Joan Elton

Lead inspector