

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

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111678
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	325428
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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)	230
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	Mr Michael Doherty
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Casey
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Low Grange Avenue Billingham TS23 3NN
Telephone number	01642 560056
Fax number	01642 644560

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size primary school serves mainly Catholic families in east Billingham, which is a locality with areas of social disadvantage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils are from White British families. A few come from other ethnic backgrounds and a small number from Poland are learning English as an additional language. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in the Nursery and Reception Years.

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 and improving school, where some aspects of its work are outstanding. The school's excellent care, guidance and support for pupils lie at the heart of the outstandingly inclusive education it provides. The headteacher and her leadership team provide good direction and support for the school's work to everyone. Together they successfully promote the school's Christian values and foster the philosophy that every child does matter. Good teaching and a good curriculum help pupils to achieve well and develop personal qualities, such as respect for others, confidence and maturity. Fruitful partnerships with parents, the church, heritage and outdoor centres greatly benefit pupils' education and development. The great majority of parents hold the school in the highest regard. One parent's comments reflect their confidence, 'My children are achieving high standards and have great relationships with all members of staff. They are given varied work and opportunities to excel. I feel I have a great relationship with the school and am very comfortable approaching teachers if I have a concern.'

After a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average standards but their language skills are below average. Pupils make good progress throughout Years 1 to 6. Given their starting points, they achieve well and leave school with above average standards in English, mathematics and science. In the 2008 standards in Year 6, fewer pupils than expected exceeded the level expected for their age in English and mathematics. Reflecting the school's determination to ensure all have equal opportunities prompt action was taken with a new emphasis on writing and more opportunities to apply mathematical skills. These changes have led to pupils of all abilities presently in Years 2 and 6 making good progress. Many have already reached standards beyond the level expected for their age but more so in English than mathematics. Boys and girls now do equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good and sometimes excellent progress.

The school provides very high levels of pastoral care and pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Their cultural development and contribution to community cohesion are satisfactory because they have too few opportunities to extend their understanding of British and global cultural diversity. Pupils are very aware of the importance of diet and exercise to a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour is impeccable and pupils act safely and considerately in and out of lessons. They work enthusiastically and thoroughly enjoy school. Pupils willingly contribute to their school and local community and to charitable activities for others. Their social development and basic skills prepare them well for their future.

The leadership team, working with governors, has thoroughly addressed the issues for attention raised at the last inspection. Diligently managed arrangements for monitoring teaching quality and successful support for inexperienced teachers are improving learning. Given pupils' good achievement and personal development, the school makes good use of its resources and obtains good value for money. Governors and senior leaders are strongly committed to raising standards and school improvement. They have sound plans to develop new governors' expertise and extend their role in monitoring. There is a very strong team spirit to continue to develop the school and a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with abilities and skills below those usually seen for this age, and lower in the important aspects of personal and social development and language skills. They make good progress from their starting points. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are average in all areas of learning except for reading and writing development which remain below average. The promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. This combined with excellent support and care enables children to settle happily and learn routines quickly that help them gain confidence. A good balance of activities offers children many appropriate opportunities to learn and play together or independently. Activities which adults lead and support extend children's learning well. Those with learning difficulties are supported particularly well. Children enjoy using the large, safe outdoor space; for example, they were appropriately dressed and engrossed in searching for worms to study despite the rain! At present, outdoor resources offer fewer challenging activities than in the well resourced extensive indoor facilities. Good leadership has improved the curriculum and, crucially, has fostered very productive working relationships between assistants and recently qualified teachers which have developed their expertise and improved the quality of teaching. In turn, children learn successfully and achieve well. Improved use of assessment helps teachers to compile informative records of children's progress which they use well to plan activities for them. Helpfully too, effective use of information about children's progress identifies priorities for learning when they move into Year 1. Arrangements to foster partnerships are well received by parents and are strengthening the link between children's learning in school and at home.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the arrangements to further improve progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 especially for the more able pupils.
- Promote community cohesion by increasing pupils' awareness of British cultural diversity and global perspectives.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and, taking their starting points into consideration, they achieve well. When they join the school their skills and abilities, especially in communication and language, are much lower than those typically seen in children of the same age. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress so that by the end of Key Stage 1 standards are broadly average. Although teacher assessments showed standards in mathematics dipped at the highest level in 2008 compared with 2007, the school acted promptly to deal with this issue and many pupils presently in Year 2 are working at higher levels.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to make good progress, and standards in Year 6 are above average. Almost all pupils make the expected levels of progress and some exceed expectations. Results of national tests show standards rose in 2007, especially in mathematics. In 2008, unvalidated results indicate a high proportion of Year 6 pupils reached the expected level but fewer than predicted reached the highest level. As in Key Stage 1 prompt action was taken and changes are accelerating the progress of these pupils. As yet, improvements are more apparent in English than in mathematics. Nevertheless, in Year 6 all pupils are on track to meet challenging targets. As a result of very effective support closely aligned to their particular learning needs,

pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good and sometimes excellent progress in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. The school fosters very caring relationships and a very positive ethos in lessons and assemblies which successfully promote pupils' spiritual and emotional welfare, and their moral and social development. However, pupils' understanding of other cultures and ways of life is currently not so well developed and their contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory.

Pupils have a strong understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. A very successful initiative has improved the social aspects of lunchtime and greatly improved pupils' knowledge of the importance of diet. Another important change to the monitoring and encouragement of good attendance is also starting to improve attendance which is currently average. Pupils hugely enjoy taking part in physical activities and speak enthusiastically about their success in competitive sports. The school's high priority on the safety of its pupils leads them to say that they feel safe, that levels of bullying are low and any incidents are effectively addressed. They behave impeccably well in lessons and considerately in the open parts of the school where they follow well organised routines responsibly. They are polite towards adults. Pupils work with noticeable endeavour and become thoroughly involved in lessons. They thoroughly enjoy school and the friendships they make. They like the school the way it is and would not change anything. School councillors and ambassadors are proud to represent their classmates. Pupils willingly support charitable work to help worthy causes both locally and farther afield. Their above average basic and social skills and their awareness of the next phase in their education experience prepare them well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is of good quality and leads to good achievement. In the best lessons, a combination of good subject knowledge, interesting activities and efficient organisation successfully motivate pupils to do their best. Effective strategies promote positive attitudes and result in excellent behaviour. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to provide very good individual and group support and help pupils who struggle with their work to make good progress. Teachers pay close attention to consolidating pupils' basic skills, for example, by encouraging writing for different purposes in subjects such as history and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for research and redrafting written work. They explain new concepts clearly and use questions well to challenge pupils' thinking and expand their understanding. Although pupils enjoy and benefit from opportunities to contribute ideas, occasionally activities take too long, lessons overrun and there is insufficient time for discussion to reinforce key points. Teachers use assessment thoroughly. Pupils appreciate the way teachers mark their work diligently, praise their accomplishments, set clear targets and give them pointers to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good curriculum with a strong emphasis on developing the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. It meets National Curriculum requirements and arranges an appropriate balance between subjects. Work is carefully related into themes which give pupils many opportunities to practise basic skills and enable them to make good progress and achieve well. An initiative to improve mathematics is showing signs of success. Assemblies and a new personal, social and emotional development curriculum makes a major contribution to developing pupils' awareness of a spiritual dimension to life, to their strong sense of right and wrong and the consideration and politeness they show to others. Although the school is extending pupils' awareness through, for example, studies of India and links with Tanzania, they have insufficient opportunities to extend their understanding of British cultural diversity and of global perspectives. Visits to places of interest and visitors to the school enrich the curriculum. Many pupils enthusiastically take part in a wide range of after-school clubs and sports teams, and thoroughly enjoy success in competitions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils benefit greatly from the outstanding care, guidance and support the school provides. Pastoral care is a considerable strength and is characterised by excellent relationships between all adults and pupils. The school has well founded and understood procedures which properly protect and carefully support pupils. Effective measures for safeguarding children are in place, such as those required for child protection, recruiting staff, health and safety, and risk assessment for visits and activities. Excellent use is made of procedures for analysing information about pupils' progress to precisely identify pointers to improvement which are helpfully shared with all pupils and their parents. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or those slipping behind have close and effective support. As a result, almost all make good progress and some make outstanding progress, especially in literacy. Crucially, pupils receiving intensive support are not excluded from learning with their classmates. These arrangements are at the heart of the school's success in fostering good achievement for all pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management very successfully promote the school's Christian, caring ethos and positive climate for learning throughout. The headteacher and her leadership team generate a strong corporate approach amongst all staff. In particular, they have done very well to help inexperienced teachers develop skills and expertise and so make a valuable contribution in key areas of the school. Staff and governors' commitment to improve the school has improved standards and achievement. Governance is good and new governors' benefit from training to help them with their role. Governors gain a very clear knowledge of the school through an effective partnership with leaders. They receive comprehensive reports which inform them of the school's strengths and areas for development. Arrangements for evaluating the school's performance draw staff and governors into discussion and their judgements are mostly accurate if at times a little modest. Governors have plans to extend their role in direct monitoring and review to measure the impact of development plans. The leadership successfully promotes

many partnerships with the local community which foster pupils' well-being and they recognise that at this time the school's contribution to community cohesion lacks a wider dimension. The drive and energy given by good quality leadership and management are entirely responsible for improving achievement and standards, and for successfully dealing with the issues raised at the last inspection.

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 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?	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?	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?	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
The extent to which 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	3
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 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	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

25 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Billingham,
Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 3NN

Mrs Firth and I really enjoyed our visit to inspect your school. Thank you for helping us when we came into your classrooms and assembly to see you at work. You were very polite and helpful, and we did enjoy talking with those of you whom we met. I know the headteacher and all the staff are very proud of you. We were delighted to see how much you like to take part enthusiastically in activities during and after school, how you value the friendships you make and the help you get. You are well behaved and considerate to others in lessons and around the school. We were pleased to see how you contribute to school life, for example as school councillors and ambassadors and how you help others through the charities you support.

Your school gives you a good education. It is warm and welcoming and well organised. All the adults in the school look after you exceptionally well and that is why you feel safe and happy. Last year many of you from Nursery to Year 6 made good progress. The Year 6, results were high, but not quite as high as in 2007, and we noted that fewer pupils than expected reached Level 5. We were especially pleased that the extra support given to those of you struggling a little, helps you do really well. When we looked at your books we like the way your teachers tell you how well you are doing and how you can improve. We did, however, find that you do not have enough opportunities to learn about how people in other parts of Britain and the rest of the world live.

I have asked the school to help as many of you in Year 6 as possible those reach the highest levels, in mathematics especially. I have also asked the school to give you all more opportunities to find out about the many different cultures we have in Britain, and to understand about how people live in different parts of the world.

You have very many opportunities at St Joseph's Roman Catholic 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 faithfully

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector