

Our Lady and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114253
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325976
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Gianna Ulyatt

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)	0
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 Tom Clark
Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Fenwick
Date of previous school inspection	30 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Ives Road Leadgate Consett County Durham DH8 7SN
Telephone number	01207 503979

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most schools and serves pupils from the local parish and village. The socio-economic factors are below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low and none are at an early stage of speaking English. Almost half the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage join the school from a number of local nurseries. These children receive full-time provision during their Reception Year in the same class as Year 1 pupils.

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. Strong Christian values permeate all aspects of school life and are evident in the way pupils are polite, well mannered and compassionate. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils enjoy their education and discuss their work with enthusiasm. They clearly recognise that the school is fully inclusive. One pupil commented that, 'This school is for everyone.' Parents praise all aspects of the school's work and the view of many parents is reflected in the comments, 'I have nothing but praise for the school. My child greatly enjoys attending, loves the teachers and has become a confident and intelligent young person.'

Standards at the end of Year 6 are average, representing good achievement from a below average standard on entry to Year 1. Progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average. In reading and writing they are below average. In Key Stage 2, progress in reading and writing is better than in mathematics. In English, newly introduced teaching methods and rigorous assessment help pupils learn effectively, while in mathematics pupils' progress is somewhat slower because assessment procedures are not as firmly established. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Pupils of above average ability reach their targets.

Teaching and learning are good. Relationships at all levels are excellent, so pupils collaborate well with their classmates. Lessons challenge pupils' thinking skills and motivate them well. In the best lessons, the range of activities offered are interesting and varied and there is a strong emphasis on speaking and listening. The satisfactory curriculum gives priority to literacy and numeracy. Recent improvements include opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills across different subjects. Pupils are well cared for. Their progress is tracked so those who are not achieving as well as expected are quickly identified and given extra support. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included and supported well to help them achieve.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate their determination to improve the quality of education and care for pupils through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. Subject leadership has improved and all are involved in school development. As a result, new initiatives are becoming established in the school. Governors have a good understanding of the work of the school and provide a good level of support and challenge. Community cohesion is good. Global and local links are well developed, links are not quite so good with regard to improving pupils' understanding of the diversity of British society. Issues identified in the previous inspection have been tackled well and therefore the capacity to improve is good. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and provision meets the needs of all children. When children enter the Reception class their skills and abilities are well below those typical for their age, particularly in their personal development, early literacy skills and mathematical understanding. They learn and play alongside older children, consequently they progress well in their speaking and listening skills and independence. By the end of Reception, standards in all areas of learning are below average. Teaching is generally good and focuses well on key skills. The introduction of a structured programme in teaching letters and sounds

has a positive impact on improving early reading and writing skills. Adults interact sensitively and take learning forward well, particularly during adult-led activity. They offer children good support and relationships are very good. Consequently, children behave well and are clear about right and wrong. The balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities is planned and is underpinned by regular assessment based on observation. Children are well cared for and learn in a happy and safe learning environment. The spacious area indoors is used to offer a range of activities through which children pursue independent learning. However, these activities do not always have a clear focus which means some learning opportunities are missed. Children's welfare is well promoted. Children make several visits to the school before entry and this helps them settle quickly. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and team work is strong. All are clear about what is done well and what needs to improve. For example, the provision of outdoor learning is quite new, but is developing well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading and writing in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the rate of progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to gain a better understanding of the diversity of British society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of Year 6 are average and have improved since the last inspection. Achievement over time is good. On entry to Year 1, standards are below average. National assessment results in 2008 for Year 2 pupils were below average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. Current progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. National data show that in the 2008 tests for Year 6 pupils, standards in English, mathematics and science were average. This represents good achievement as almost 40% of pupils in this cohort had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Data for the current Year 6 cohort indicate a similar rate of progress to that of pupils in 2008. Progress overall in Key Stage 2 is good. Progress in reading and writing is better than in mathematics. This is because the school has introduced more rigorous tracking systems linked to assessment in English. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. By the time they leave the school, pupils are compassionate, mature and confident individuals. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They have a firm grasp of right and wrong because the school rules are consistently applied. Pupils show good respect for the natural environment and are proud of their school, the grounds and wild areas. The involvement of the school council in school improvements has resulted in the refurbishment of infant toilets and the bouncy yard and winding pathways outdoors. The council organises voting systems so that pupils can select the charities they wish to support. Attendance is average and pupils clearly like coming to school. They particularly enjoy learning new ideas and discussing these with their classmates. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and are proud of the Healthy Award the school has achieved. They enjoy a range of sporting activities in school and beyond the school day. They feel very safe in school and trained peer mediators are always there to

sort out problems should they occur. No one is left out because playground buddies are always on hand. They feel well prepared and confident about going to the next school and remark, 'We have good memories to take with us.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with the quality of teaching in lessons seen ranging from satisfactory to outstanding. Teachers share learning objectives clearly and make sure pupils know what they are expected to learn. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to make new learning interesting and meaningful. The excellent relationships in lessons motivate pupils to concentrate well and try their best. They discuss sensibly with partners and value the views of their peers. Teachers' knowledge of pupils' attainment is improving and in the best lessons they use their good subject knowledge effectively to take full account of pupils' individual needs to provide challenging tasks. They question pupils well to check their understanding. The pace of lessons is good and teachers use a good range of strategies to engage pupils in their learning. Good support from experienced assistants is given to all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This enables them to remain on task and make good progress. Teachers make sure that pupils are fully aware of the smaller steps they need to take to improve their writing. However, in mathematics this good practice is inconsistently applied. In Key Stage 1, teachers challenge pupils better in mathematics than in reading and writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Priority is given to literacy and numeracy and activities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively planned so that the needs of individuals are well met. A particular strength in the curriculum is the way pupils are given good opportunities to use their writing skills across different subjects. Pupils speak highly of this method because they say it makes learning fun and they can easily make meaningful links across subjects. In addition, through the topics chosen, pupils have the chance to write in different genres. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' social understanding results in pupils valuing each other and having good levels of respect for one another. The school provides lessons in French which pupils thoroughly enjoy. Pupils' learning is enriched through a range of extra curricular clubs, including football, cooking, art and craft and Japanese.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, support and guidance for its pupils. The welcoming ethos of the school reflects its Christian aims of valuing individuals and developing the whole child. All staff show high levels of care and concern for pupils' welfare. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils ensure that all feel safe and happy. In addition, pupils have opportunities to express their concerns and worries in confidence to trained staff. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for in school and this view is also reflected by parents. Good links with external agencies ensure pupils receive the right provision. Procedures to safeguard children with routines

for child protection and health and safety are fully in place. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and in their writing pupils are clear about how they can improve. In mathematics, academic guidance is less clear. The school has recently introduced systems for tracking pupils that are linked to assessment. This is developing well in English and is having a good impact on the rate of progress current cohorts are making. In mathematics the procedures have just begun and it is too early to see evidence of their effectiveness.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. All are strongly focused on raising pupils' achievement, particularly in the basic skills. Teamwork and communication among staff are strong and all collaborate effectively for the benefit of all pupils. Self-evaluation is detailed and focuses on the right areas for improvement. Subject leadership has improved since the last inspection. All are involved in monitoring and evaluating their subjects through checking planning and pupils' work, analysing data and tracking pupils' progress. They contribute effectively to whole school planning for improvement. Governors are knowledgeable, loyal and supportive of the school. They undertake their role very seriously and hold the school to account. They are closely involved in promoting the strategic direction of the school. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. There are good links with the local community, including the local church and visits to other places of worship. There are also very effective partnerships with the nearby university and other local primary and secondary schools. International links with schools in France, through video conferencing, are well established. However, links to improve pupils' understanding the diversity of British society are not particularly well established.

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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 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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Brooms, Durham, DH8 7SN

I had a very enjoyable time in your school. You are very welcoming and friendly. It is good to see you growing up into confident and compassionate young people. I particularly liked the way you welcome everyone into your school so no one is left out. I was impressed with your enthusiasm for Shakespeare's plays. You clearly enjoy them.

I know most of you work very hard and it is good to see some of you getting high test results. However, in mathematics in Key Stage 2 the school results are not as good as they are in reading and writing. In Key Stage 1, it is the reverse with standards in mathematics being better than they are in reading and writing. I have asked the school to look carefully at this. You therefore have a very important part to play. You must work even harder, so your parents and teachers can be really proud of you.

I was pleased to see how exceptionally well behaved you are in your lessons and around the school. I know you feel safe and secure when you are in school. The school knows you very well and tries to match your work to your individual ability.

I know your teachers work very hard to provide interesting work for you. You are particular good at expressing your ideas and you clearly enjoy sharing these with your classmates. You support charities well and have good links with the church, local schools and schools in France. I have asked the school to help you find out more about our diverse British society.

Thank you again for being so helpful and don't forget, the harder you work, the more choices you will have about your future life opportunities.

Yours sincerely

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector