

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Blaydon

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108395
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	337064
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Kate Pringle

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Jenkinson
Headteacher	Mr James Hannah
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Croftdale Road Blaydon-on-Tyne Tyne and Wear NE21 4BG
Telephone number	0191 4143108
Fax number	0191 4142138
Email address	blaydonstjosephscatholicprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed nine teachers. In addition, they met with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents and observed the school's work. They looked at documents and records for safeguarding, pupils' workbooks, assessment information about pupils' progress and updates of progress towards meeting targets. They also considered questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 62 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils are progressing currently and what standards they are attaining
- how well teachers use assessment data to plan work for pupils of differing abilities
- how well leaders use their delegated responsibilities to initiate improvements in their areas and improve pupils' outcomes.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average Catholic primary school, situated in an urban area just outside Gateshead. The percentage of pupils entitled to take free school meals is lower than the national average. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds with small numbers from other backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above levels found nationally.

The school holds awards for Investors in People, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Financial Management in Schools, Activemark and Healthy Schools. It is one of a small number of schools in the country to be awarded the International Schools Award for the third time.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Many aspects of its work are outstanding. Caring relationships are at its heart and this is reflected in the excellent relationships between pupils and their teachers as they work and grow together. Communication with parents and carers is good and most applaud the dedication of the school to support and care for their children finding staff to be, 'extremely approachable and helpful'. One parent expressed the views of many by writing, 'My children have always felt safe, secure and happy.' Well-presented learning opportunities provide pupils with experiences which engage their interest and enthusiasm. Pupils state wholeheartedly that they enjoy coming to this school where they feel safe and secure and this is reflected in the high levels of attendance. Behaviour is exceptional; pupils are extremely polite and well mannered and they support each other very well in their lessons and at play. They have an excellent understanding of right and wrong and use this to reflect upon the needs of others in their local community and in the wider world. Pupils enjoy the opportunities provided to make a difference in their school and readily take on responsibilities to support others and be a voice for them within the school and the local community.

From entry points below those expected for their age, pupils leave with standards in line with national averages and this means that overall they make good progress. Good teaching and interesting lessons motivate pupils to engage to learn. Improved tracking systems for pupils' attainment mean that teachers now have a better understanding of standards achieved. However, the use of assessment information to set targets to challenge individual needs is not tuned finely enough and this contributes to inconsistencies in pupils' progress across year groups. The school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils involving a range of strategies and outside agencies to support families. The needs of those who are vulnerable, who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well met, enabling these pupils to make good progress. Overall, outcomes for pupils are good and the school provides good value for money.

Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Self-evaluation successfully identifies key areas for action. Areas identified at the previous inspection, together with newly identified priorities, have been addressed. The appointment and reallocation of responsibilities is having a very positive impact on the school's development. As a result, the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise standards so that pupils make good progress across all year groups by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use assessment data to develop finely-tuned targets which reflect individual levels of ability
 - plan activities to reflect targets in order that outcomes for individual abilities may be met
 - share with pupils the target which will be used for marking in a particular lesson
 - feedback how well pupils have achieved against these targets and indicate clearly the next level to be worked towards as a result of past achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' outstanding behaviour and clear enjoyment of school contribute greatly to their good achievement. Pupils understand the high expectations their teachers have of them and this motivates them to attend well and to do their best. Where progress is good or better, pupils engage in activities which promote opportunities to consider situations and problems through quality discussions. For example, Year 6 pupils debated at length and with some insight into the use of inference when studying 'The Boy with Striped Pyjamas'.

Pupils make good progress from when they start school to when they leave at the end of Year 6. Their progress is rapid in the Reception class but slows in some classes in the main school. This is because teachers vary in their effective use of performance data to plan work for different abilities. Hence, while progress overall remains good, it is uneven throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language make good progress because of early identification and carefully tailored support.

Pupils are extremely polite and well behaved. They speak well of their friends and staff and know that staff will quickly help them with concerns. They say there is no bullying or racism and talk well about how they can help to keep themselves safe. Pupils understand the need to eat sensibly and this is reflected in their appreciation of the recently improved lunches where there has been much greater take-up. Many take advantage of a wide range of additional activities to keep themselves fit through the good sport and dance opportunities. Their understanding of healthy-living issues is reflected in the awards of Healthy Schools status and the Activemark. Pupils love their school and enjoy the responsibilities of being a buddy in the playground or a 'special friend' to Reception children. They engage well within the local community and have strong links with schools globally engaging successfully in joint projects to create books and DVDs to share among children of other countries. Pupils have excellent opportunities to reflect upon the actions and their consequences and so develop a very strong understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Overall, pupils are well prepared for their future learning.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use a wide range of different strategies to successfully engage pupils in learning. 'Big Write' and the use of phonics are helping to improve pupils' writing and reading skills. The effective use of interactive whiteboards successfully engages pupils as teachers share knowledge and model expectations. Clear lesson objectives enable pupils to understand the purpose of the lesson and what is expected of them. Most effective progress is made when pupils understand what they need to do in order to achieve specific literacy and numeracy targets. Not all teachers use this information effectively to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged and this can limit progress for some pupils. Marking gives good feedback against lesson objectives but, again, is not used consistently to confirm achievement against individual targets or to identify next steps in learning. Where learning is good or better, lessons are well paced and activities really challenge pupils' thinking through well-matched opportunities. A rich curriculum provides a range of activities, well supported by visits and visitors, to extend pupils' experience of life. The use of specialists, for example in French and dance, enable pupils to access high levels of expertise and improve their skills.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Improving links between subjects are providing increasing opportunities to apply skills in literacy and information and communication technology across the curriculum. Pupils take every advantage of these extra activities, ranging from judo and ballet to booster classes. They succeed very well in a variety of sports and successfully engage competitively at different levels. This helps to raise their self-esteem and confidence. These personal attributes are further promoted for older pupils through residential visits to outdoor activity centres.

This inclusive school provides sensitive and effective support for vulnerable pupils and for those with difficulties in learning. Recent improvements mean that individual needs are quickly identified and successfully addressed through targeted interventions. Effective support is provided by skilled teaching assistants. There are well-established links for staff with both parents and carers and with other agencies. This means that most barriers to learning are quickly overcome and this can be best seen in the much improved attendance and excellent behaviour which reflect good attitudes to learning. Staff work closely with a range of other providers, including schools and feeder nurseries, to ensure that pupils settle quickly and transfer confidently.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

This is a thriving school community. The school has a very good reputation in the community and there is high regard for the work of staff. Good partnerships with parents and carers, and with outside agencies, together with good outcomes for pupils, demonstrate that pupils are well supported. The school successfully promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination well. The headteacher has delegated aspects of leadership well and, as a result, the clear resolve generated by the headteacher and senior leaders has created a highly motivated team working towards a common purpose.

Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and their responsibilities. Self-evaluation is accurate and enables leaders to work collaboratively to identify the right actions for improvement. Good use is made of monitoring and evaluation to improve the quality of teaching and other areas of provision. For example, relative weaknesses in writing and mathematics have been identified and are presently being addressed. Through a range of effective strategies, pupils' achievement and personal development are being improved.

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There is strong provision for community cohesion through well-developed local links and established contacts with a considerable range of other cultures internationally. These links enable pupils to acquire a better understanding of other beliefs and ways of living. The governing body is knowledgeable and has a good understanding of the school. They are able to challenge the school towards greater improvement and their understanding of statutory requirements means that safeguarding requirements are well met.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with skills below those expected for their age. The warm atmosphere and good relationships contribute to children's growing confidence. As they share and take turns, children learn simple rules which contribute to their safety and well-being. They behave very well and settle quickly in this secure environment. Children enjoy the experiences provided and happily demonstrate increasing levels of independence. The needs of those with special educational needs and/or difficulties, and other needs are quickly identified and well met. By the time children are ready to enter Year 1 most attain skills expected for their age.

Teachers make good use of resources to engage children in appropriate activities to meet their needs. There is a very clear focus upon activities to extend skills in learning sounds and letters, reading and writing. Computers are used well to help with spelling and children happily engage in challenging each other through games. Children are encouraged to initiate their own learning but there are too few opportunities for children to engage in interesting, problem-solving activities to encourage their curiosity. Outdoor provision, including large apparatus, provides a good range of activities. However, there

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are some limitations to the freedom children have to access this area and this restricts children their choice of how, and where, they learn. Staff observe children closely, recording progress through 'learning journeys', sharing this with parents in home–school diaries.

Staff work well together to ensure that children progress rapidly. Since the last inspection, new ways of learning, improved tracking and better outdoor resources have contributed to improving outcomes for children. The new leader has a very good understanding of the strengths of the setting and there has been good development of the areas identified for improvement. Children's needs are well met, supported by effective partnerships with parents and carers, and a range of external partners.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

This is a well–supported school where the vast majority of parents and carers are extremely positive about the care and consideration given to their children. The headteacher and his staff are held in high regard and parents feel that they are welcomed into the school. They feel that their concerns are listened to carefully and acted upon quickly. Positive comments in the questionnaire referred to a, 'lovely school with a well motivated staff'. A small minority of parents would like more after-school provision. However, inspection found that the school provides many opportunities for pupils to engage in a wide range of activities in addition to the provision of a breakfast club each morning. Inspectors found no evidence to support individual concerns raised concerning bullying and the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Some parents were concerned about the shorter time pupils get to eat their lunch. The school is aware of the problem, which is due to an increase in pupils taking school meals. It is presently trying out different ways of providing meals so that pupils are equally catered for. Reception children are encouraged to stay for lunch as part of their personal and social development.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Blaydon to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 207 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	61	23	37	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	66	21	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	55	28	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	58	23	37	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	41	66	20	32	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	52	28	45	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	56	24	39	3	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	53	23	37	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	55	26	42	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	48	27	44	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	32	36	58	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	53	28	45	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	65	20	32	2	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Blaydon, Blaydon-on-Tyne, NE21 4BG

It was lovely to meet up with so many of you when we visited your school recently. Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave us. We did enjoy talking to many of you and to find out how much you enjoy coming to school. Thank you especially to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us.

Staff take good care of you and you feel very safe and confident because you know that you can go to them and your concerns will be dealt with quickly. Both you and your parents feel that your school is a happy school and we were very impressed with your excellent attendance and behaviour, and the care and respect that you give to others. You clearly enjoy the many experiences your school provides and we know this because we have seen you listen well and work hard to do your very best. It was good to hear how much you appreciate visiting places, working with different people and taking part in lots of after-school activities. This means that you get to know a lot about the big world out there and all of the many opportunities it can offer you.

Yours is a good school with many strengths. You work well but we think that your teachers can help you to meet bigger challenges and achieve even more. Therefore, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to raise standards for all of you by making sure that you always make good progress in every class. They can help you to do this by making sure that all teachers:

- give you tasks which are matched to your individual targets
- share with you the target which they will use to mark your work
- tell you how well you have achieved and what you need to do next, especially if you need to go on to a higher level.

Good luck for the future

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kate Pringle

Lead inspector

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