

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

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114273
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338327
Inspection dates	6–7 July 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	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Conway
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Boyle/Mrs Catherine Craig
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Six lessons were observed taught by five different teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, staff and a parent. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, assessment information, policies and procedures, school development plans and updates of pupils' progress. Views of stakeholders in the school were also considered through questionnaires from 51 parents and carers, 10 staff and 55 pupils.

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

- the quality of assessment used by teachers to plan for differing abilities and how effectively this is contributing to raising standards
- how well the curriculum engages pupils and enables them to use their basic skills in other areas of learning
- how effectively all leaders and managers are involved in self-evaluation and how their contributions have an impact upon improved outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school with leadership responsibilities shared between two headteachers who job-share. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school population is mainly White British. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups and few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than national levels as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school during the year is above what might normally be expected.

The school has Healthy Schools status and holds the following awards: Anti-bullying, Food for Life bronze – flagship school, International School intermediate, Activemark, and Financial Systems in Schools (FMSiS)

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This good school provides a warm, calm and caring climate for learning. The inspirational leadership of both headteachers ensures a strong focus upon care, consideration for others and improving pupils' achievement. Pupils benefit from a positive atmosphere embedded in Christian values. They have a good awareness of the feelings of others and respect those from different cultures and backgrounds. They understand right and wrong well and they behave well. The vast majority of parents and carers appreciate the caring and inclusive nature of the school. One typical comment explains how the school educates the whole child 'by encouraging self-belief, building confidence and the importance of making a positive contribution to society'.

Most children enter Reception with skills well below those expected for their age. Children progress well, particularly in adult-led activities. However, activities for children to investigate and solve problems for themselves are fewer and do not provide enough opportunities for staff to observe children using their newly acquired knowledge and skills independently. Pupils leave Year 6 with average attainment because good progress is built on consistently across the school. High levels of mobility and significant proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially at Key Stage 2, can have a significant impact on overall attainment by the end of Year 6. Writing remains the weakest area. Individual targets are not used regularly enough to match tasks to individuals' ability and although teachers feed back suggestions of how to improve work, not all provide opportunities for pupils to review these comments and make the appropriate amendments. Well developed links with parents and carers, and with other partners, ensure that pupils' academic and personal needs are well met. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, who speak English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported and this enables them to make good progress. Overall, pupils' achievement is good.

The clear vision of both headteachers demonstrates a deep commitment to pupils and staff which is shared by an outstandingly innovative and perceptive governing body. This strong team firmly focuses upon improving outcomes for pupils and is well supported by other leaders who contribute to the rigorous evaluation of the school and its development. Recent successes in developing a more creative curriculum, embedding new assessment systems to improve pupils' progress, increasing attendance and improvements to writing are increasing pupils' enjoyment of learning and their outcomes. As a result, the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of writing by:
- – making more effective use of what pupils can do to plan tasks well matched to individuals' ability to enable greater challenge in literacy and in other subjects
- – ensuring that pupils have the opportunities to consider feedback from teachers and amend their work accordingly.
- Improve learning opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
- – providing problem-solving and creative activities through which children can work together to investigate and explore, talking about their thoughts and findings
- – ensuring that observations of such child-initiated learning recognises children's successes and builds on these to develop greater challenge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most pupils enjoy school. They have good attitudes to learning and are well motivated to achieve their best. They are particularly enthusiastic in situations where they encounter new challenges. For example, when Year 6 pupils encountered new learning in mathematics, they worked together applying their previous knowledge to the problem set and engaged in high levels of discussion to come to their conclusions.

Pupils achieve well and progress is consistently good throughout the school. Despite this, attainment is broadly average by the time pupils leave in Year 6 due to the high levels of mobility and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, both of which distort the apparent overall progress of different cohorts. Standards in writing show some improvement but remain below those in reading and mathematics. The improvement in all subjects demonstrated by Year 6 in 2009 has increased in 2010. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls and individual groups of pupils make similarly good progress.

Pupils feel safe in school. They recognise that there is some inappropriate behaviour but talk about the difficulties some individual pupils are encountering. This attitude reflects the understanding and respect that pupils have for others. Additional provision, for example of e-safety and cycling proficiency, adds to individual skills. A number of opportunities promote pupils' health and well-being through, for example, good-quality physical provision, gardening and cookery. Well developed links with the local community, including a joint gardening project and work with disabled people, help pupils to recognise how to become responsible members of their community. The school council and playground 'friends' engage pupils in helping others and improving their school. There is active support of charities and other local groups and these, together with developed links with another city school and a school abroad, contribute to pupils' understanding of those from different cultures and backgrounds. The average attendance of pupils together with their average attainment means that pupils are appropriately prepared for their next stage of learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Positive attitudes to learning are well supported through good relationships and a positive ethos. Teachers use their good knowledge and skills well to model new learning supported by their effective use of interactive whiteboards. Regular assessment records the attainment and progress of pupils over time and the use of this data has improved the quality of challenge for pupils in all subjects and led to increased progress. However, how teachers use this information to meet the differing needs of pupils in writing tasks is not consistent or regular enough. This means that challenge and progress can slow. Where the best practice was observed: tasks were well matched to individuals' ability in literacy and in other subjects; teachers fed back where improvements are needed; and pupils had time to correct their work accordingly.

The developing curriculum is linking subjects to provide a more relevant and interesting curriculum for pupils though increased opportunities for practical and collaborative work. New laptops and electronic notebooks give pupils greater opportunities to improve their skills in information and communication technology (ICT). By the end of Year 6 pupils' skills are advanced and ICT is now a strength of the school. A very well planned programme of additional activities which are accessed by high proportions of pupils contributes well to their acquisition of different skills and to their healthy lifestyle. A range of visits, including residential opportunities, and visitors help pupils to access experiences which increase their understanding of the wider world and inspire them to

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

have higher aspirations for their future.

The pastoral care of pupils is a real strength of the school. Detailed knowledge and understanding of pupils and their families ensures that the school is particularly good at breaking down barriers that interfere with learning. Individuals' needs are identified rapidly and appropriate support assures that pupils are fully included in all areas of the curriculum. Although some success has been achieved in improving attendance and reducing the number of pupils with high levels of absence, a proportion of families continue to take holidays during term time which limits further improvement. Good levels of communication with other schools and with agencies successfully contribute to high-quality intervention and transition at all stages.

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?

The highly effective work of the headteachers together with the governing body promotes a real sense of vision and commitment to improving outcomes for pupils. Other leaders in the school share this vision but some are relatively new to their roles and are at differing points in developing their responsibilities. Self-evaluation is secure and securely targets areas for development. The good tracking of attainment enables good understanding of attainment and the progress pupils make and this means that targets to improve pupils' outcomes are challenging. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and assessment is successfully driving identified improvements to have a positive impact on learning and progress. Governors fulfil all duties outstandingly well. Their innovative systems and practice, together with their focused responsibilities in the school, enable them to provide high levels of challenge to leaders which contributes very effectively to the direction of the school.

Well embedded procedures and checks ensure the provision of a safe and healthy environment for pupils. Additional activities to promote pupils' safety through the curriculum increase the individual responsibility of pupils to keep themselves safe.

Effective links with parents and carers, and with other partners, are successful because of well embedded lines of communication and good quality relationships. High quality relationships with the local community and developing links with those of different cultures and backgrounds all serve to promote good understanding of the diversity of needs found in society. Effective actions to increase the participation of different groups of pupils and to improve their performance promote equal opportunities well. The school

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

provides good value for money.

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	1
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

Most children enter with skills well below those expected for their age, with communication and language a particular weakness. Within the warm and welcoming environment, children settle quickly. Behaviour is good and children happily share and take turns as they freely access the activities on offer. Children make good progress in all areas because of high quality adult-led activities which extend their vocabulary and enable children to access new skills. Tasks for children to learn independently are less well focused upon developing skills in language, personal development and mathematics. These activities do not enable children to develop their inquisitive natures or challenge them to solve problems together practising their newly acquired skills of language and numeracy. Attainment in language and literacy, in mathematics and personal development on entry to Year 1 are lower than average, despite the good progress made. The needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well.

Children enjoy school and this is noted by parents and carers who appreciate the care and attention given to their children. Adults ensure that activities and resources are safe and children benefit from the easy access to the outdoor area. Children are encouraged to learn simple rules and acquire good hygiene habits. Staff display a good understanding of each individual child's needs and interests. However, strategies to observe progress in independent activities and gather evidence to plan new learning to build on learnt skills are underdeveloped. Overall, the provision is well led and there is a

strong sense of teamwork as staff work well together to evaluate the strengths and next steps in developing the setting further.

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

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are extremely positive about the school and hold both of the headteachers and the staff in high regard. They greatly appreciate the care and consideration given to their children and are confident that any concerns are listened to and acted upon appropriately. The few concerns raised as to how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour were fully investigated by inspectors with no serious issues found.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 107 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	75	10	20	3	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	75	13	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	57	20	39	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	57	19	37	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	61	17	33	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	55	20	39	3	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	63	18	35	1	2	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)	37	73	11	22	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	61	16	31	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	43	21	41	7	14	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	47	24	47	3	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	63	18	35	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	65	15	29	3	6	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



08 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham, DH1 2JQ

Thank you for the lovely welcome you gave to inspectors when we visited your school. Yours is a good school and you talk enthusiastically of the many opportunities provided by your teachers to work in school and in your local community. It is evident that you enjoy school and you care a great deal for your friends and staff. We saw this in your good behaviour and the way you listen carefully in lessons. You work very hard and this shows in the good progress you all make. We were very impressed with the way you use your laptops and notebooks in your lessons. This helps you to have better opportunities to use your skills of reading, writing and mathematics across other subjects and to learn about different ways to present your work.

We know that changes to your curriculum are providing different ways for you to investigate challenges and be more creative which contribute to your increasing confidence and understanding.

We feel that there are some things your teachers could help you to achieve even more, so we have asked them to do these things.

- Help you improve your writing by giving you more opportunities to achieve your individual targets across different subjects. We'd like teachers to plan challenging tasks and make sure that when they tell you what needs to be corrected you have the time to read their comments and correct your work.
- Give children in the Early Years Foundation Stage more opportunities to be inquisitive and solve problems through activities where they can talk together and use their new skills. We'd like teachers to use their knowledge of how well children do to plan even greater challenges for them.

We hope that you will help your teachers in every way you can and wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kate Pringle

Lead inspector

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