

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Church Lane, Murton, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 9RD

Inspection dates 16–17 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their individual starting points, pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the time they leave the school, they reach standards that are at least average, and on occasion well above average, in reading writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is consistently good and on occasion it is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to ensure that pupils have the help they need to address individual difficulties.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. All staff are dedicated to providing a stimulating and safe environment in which pupils learn and develop into responsible young people. Outdoor facilities are a particular strength.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good. All pupils clearly enjoy school and this is demonstrated in their frequently exemplary attitudes to learning. Pupils are polite, well-mannered and are proud of their school. They state that they feel happy and safe.
- The headteacher, supported by governors and a very capable deputy headteacher, has maintained a focus on continuing to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge for the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough to lead to pupils making outstanding progress.
- Pupils' progress in writing is not yet as strong as it is in reading and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons. One of these was a joint observation with the headteacher. The inspector also made a number of short visits to classrooms.
- The inspector talked to pupils about their experiences in school and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector talked to pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher and the school's senior staff. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), together with the results of the school's own questionnaire to parents and discussions with parents during the school day.
- The inspector took account of eight staff inspection questionnaire responses.
- The inspector observed the school's work and examined a range of documents, including the school's own view of its performance and planning for improvement, the information the school keeps on pupils' current progress and achievement, records relating to behaviour and attendance and the school's safeguarding information.
- Pupils were observed at playtime, lunchtime and at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Alan Sergison, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There has been a recent period of significant staffing instability in the school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those children looked after by the local authority or from service families, is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has achieved a number of awards including the Healthy School Award, the Eco Schools Green Flag Award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - the questioning skills of all teachers are as sharp as those in the very best lessons so that teachers can regularly check pupils' understanding in order to finely tune teaching to meet pupils' different needs
 - all lessons maintain a brisk pace
 - pupils have more opportunities to respond to teacher marking, especially in writing
 - opportunities are provided for teachers to share the very best practice in the school and in other schools.
- Raise achievement and increase pupils' progress in writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length and across a range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. However, on occasion, these can be below what is expected. This varies from year to year in small cohorts of pupils. Pupils make good progress across the school and leave with standards that are at least in line, and on occasion well above national standards. The apparent weaker levels of pupil progress seen in the 2012 Year 6 national tests were the result of the school's own over generous assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, which resulted in the progress pupils made appearing to be not as strong as in previous years. The school has addressed this issue. The standards and levels of progress achieved by pupils in Year 6 in national tests in 2013 were well above national levels.
- Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle quickly into classroom routines, have access to a broad range of stimulating activities both in and out of doors and are very well supported by the adults around them. They quickly become confident learners as demonstrated by a group of children who were pretending to be members of the local press, writing a newspaper article about the school awards ceremony they had just taken part in. They confidently shared their learning with each other and adults.
- Pupils' attainment across the school is good. Inspection evidence and the results of national tests shows that pupils' current attainment in English and mathematics is broadly in line with national expectations in Key Stage 1 and predictions for the current Year 5 pupils confirm that they are also on track to attain well and make good progress by the time they leave the school in Year 6.
- However, pupils' progress in writing is not yet as strong as in reading and mathematics.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. A high priority has been placed on developing pupils' reading skills. Children are well supported to recognise letters and the sounds they make (phonics). The majority blend these sounds and build words confidently, making good progress. This is demonstrated in the high percentages of pupils succeeding in the national phonics screening test. Pupils are able to discuss the work of different authors and to express a preference for different styles of writing. They develop a love of reading.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. Their needs are identified at an early stage and teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that they receive the help they need.
- Only very small numbers of pupils are eligible for pupil premium. These pupils do, however, make good progress. As a result, there are few gaps in their attainment, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, compared to their peers. In 2012, there were no pupils in Year 6 eligible for this funding. In 2013, they performed equally as well as their peers.
- Senior leaders make regular checks on the progress pupils make to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to perform equally well. Where pupils are seen to be in danger of falling behind, there is prompt intervention and support. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and on occasion it is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan stimulating lessons making use of a good range of resources, for example, when using interactive whiteboards to make lessons interesting as well as to hold pupils' attention.
- Pupils often have exemplary attitudes to learning and there are very good relationships between adults and pupils. Good use is made of 'learning partners' where pupils talk together to share their ideas. This shared working helps them to clarify their thinking and rehearse their ideas before writing.

- In a very successful Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils made very good progress when they were challenged and motivated to work on an activity involving factors and multiples. The teacher's high expectations and sharp use of questioning ensured a brisk pace to learning. Pupils were able to explain their methods and reasoning and were able to think strategically in a competitive game situation to achieve their aim.
- Not all teaching is as good as this, however. On rare occasions, teacher questioning of pupils is not as sharp and, consequently, the pace of the lesson slows, and so does the rate of learning. Pupils' attention then begins to wane.
- Marking of pupils' books takes place regularly and is thorough. Teachers provide helpful comments on what pupils have to do to move on to the next stage and pupils appreciate this. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to respond to this marking and learn from the advice given, especially in writing.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher make regular checks on the quality of teaching and use this information to tailor staff training. Any underperformance is swiftly challenged.
- The progress of pupils in writing is not as brisk as it is in reading and mathematics. This is because teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write at length or across a range of subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in and around the school is good. This makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils have good and often exemplary attitudes to learning. Only on rare occasions, when teaching is less stimulating, does pupils' attention wane.
- Pupils state that they feel safe, happy and well looked after, and parents agree. They feel that they have a range of adults to turn to if they need support and that help would be forthcoming. As one pupil stated, 'We all get along very well and respect each other. If we have a problem we have a range of adults who would help us.'
- Pupils state that there is no bullying in school. They understand about the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and they know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet.
- Parents express overwhelmingly positive views about pupils' behaviour. One parent summed up the views of many, 'This is a lovely family school. Standards of education are second to none.'
- Pupils relish the opportunity to take responsibility, for example, when supporting younger pupils and in caring for the welfare of the school livestock.
- Levels of attendance are good. Staff have worked hard to ensure that pupils and parents recognise the importance of regular attendance. These high levels also reflect pupils' enjoyment of school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership for the school. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher and governors and they express a shared ambition for the continuous improvement of the school, and the very best for pupils. This means that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.
- Senior leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching. Any underperformance is swiftly challenged and difficult decisions have been taken to secure improvements. Staff are held to account for the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and know what needs to be done to secure further improvements. All staff work well together as a cohesive team, closely focused on improving pupils' achievement. Senior leaders have not as yet, however, provided sufficient opportunities for the very best practice in school to be shared more widely.
- There are effective systems in place to check the performance of teachers. Staff are set

challenging targets for improvement which are closely linked to the school's needs. Staff training is well focused on further enhancing teachers' skills. Any increases in teachers' salaries are closely linked to their performance.

- Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination lie at the heart of the school's work. This is an inclusive school where pupils all get on well together. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive the extra support they need. The school has a strong sense of community.
- The school provides an exciting and stimulating curriculum for pupils. The high quality of the outside learning environment makes a very significant contribution to this. Pupils really enjoy their experiences both within and beyond the school. This includes a good range of additional activities and a range of visits and visitors to the school. Older pupils really appreciate the opportunity of a residential visit to Lockerbie. These all make a significant contribution to promoting pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The basic skills are developed well through the curriculum, but senior leaders are aware that writing is an area of relatively weaker performance and that pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length or across subjects.
- The school works closely with parents. The vast majority are very satisfied with the care and support that their children receive.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- The local authority provides effective light touch support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides effective support and challenge to the school. Governors have accessed relevant training and development opportunities. They express a clear plan for school improvement and ensuring that that pupils' achievement and standards continue to improve. They review information about pupils' progress and understand how the school is performing and how this relates to the national picture. They have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and have supported the headteacher to take difficult decisions to challenge underperformance. They are not afraid to hold the school to account, and have developed appropriate links to key areas of the work of the school. They are fully aware of the link between teachers' pay and performance and set challenging targets for the headteacher. They are aware of how the pupil premium is spent and the positive impact that it is having. They have clear procedures to check that school finances are used effectively to secure the best outcomes for pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114276
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	411923

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	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Sawyers
Headteacher	Joanne Jones
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2009
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