



St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Newton Aycliffe

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114266
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289857
Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006
Reporting inspector Graeme Clarke

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Garburn Place
School category	Voluntary aided		Newton Aycliffe, County Durham
Age range of pupils	3–11		DL5 7DE DL5 7DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 300337
Number on roll (school)	154	Fax number	01325 300337
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father James Dunne
		Headteacher	Mrs Jackie Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006	Inspection number 289857
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils come from Newton Aycliffe and the nearby villages. Most are from a White British background. The average number taking free school meals reflects the socio-economic character of the locality. An above average number have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An external provider is responsible for before and after school care on the premises. The school gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2004 and the Healthy Schools Award in 2005.

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 provides a good education for its pupils. The headteacher's very effective leadership successfully promotes the school's Christian ethos and a clear philosophy that every child does matter. One parent's comment summed up their views: 'St Joseph's is a very caring school, empathetic to the needs and feelings of children and parents'.

Good quality teaching helps pupils throughout the school to make good progress and achieve well. The school analyses each pupil's progress carefully and gives prompt support whenever the need arises. Excellent links with neighbouring schools enrich the curriculum for all pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage. However, the planned activities for the outside area do not exploit the opportunities to promote children's skills in all areas of their learning.

Pupils' abilities are close to average when they begin Nursery. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage, their above average standard of personal development forms the basis for their future achievement. Their abilities in other areas of learning are as expected for their age. In recent national assessments, relative to their standards when pupils began Year 1, pupils made good progress and achieved well in Year 2, except they did not do as well in written work as in mathematics and reading. In 2005, the school successfully met its challenging targets for Year 6 attainment by sustaining pupils' good progress and above average standards in mathematics and science. This year, English results were closer to those expected for 11 year olds because written work was not as good as reading. Pupils enjoy a real sense of achievement, for example, in their good quality art and design and technology work and through their sporting accomplishments.

Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully prepares pupils to be good citizens and for the next phase of their education. They are polite and well behaved. Bullying is rare and is promptly dealt with. Pupils know how to stay safe. New playground equipment fosters exercise and many pupils take part in after school sports activities. The 'Healthy School' award reflects pupils' awareness of and the school's approach to healthy lifestyles. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider communities. Older pupils eagerly and confidently take on responsibilities which enhance their development and sense of purpose. They are compassionate towards the needs of others and support many charities.

The headteacher and governors ensure the school is well led and managed and have a clear and accurate perspective on all aspects of its work. They get the best value from their resources, and foster pupils' good progress, personal development and academic achievement. They have successfully addressed all issues from the last inspection and improved standards. The capacity for further improvement is good. Taking all this into account their school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing throughout the school.

- Widen the use of the outdoor provision in the Foundation Stage to extend children's development in all areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress in their personal and social development. They leave the Foundation Stage as confident learners having made satisfactory progress developing skills and knowledge in other areas of learning.

Over the last two years, pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6 especially, did better than anticipated in national tests when their starting points and capabilities are taken into account. Year 2 pupils reached above average standards in the 2005 assessments. Results were a little lower in 2006 but small groups make year-on-year comparisons difficult. Pupils did well in mathematics. Standards in writing were below those for reading.

Standards were above average in the Year 6 tests in 2005. In 2006 the school sustained its high standards in mathematics and science. Standards in English were close to those expected nationally for pupils of this age, but pupils' written English was not as good as their reading. Girls did particularly well at the highest Level 5 in reading and science as did boys in mathematics. Gifted and talented pupils, those with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who learn English as an additional language have their needs addressed well, and so make good and sometimes very good progress in their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour in and out of class is good so learning is not disrupted. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils attend regularly because they thoroughly enjoy coming to school. A comprehensive photographic record reflects the happy memories pupils have when they leave. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy. Their representatives make a good contribution to healthy eating through 'SNAG', the School Nutrition Action Group. Older pupils also eagerly and confidently take on other responsibilities. School council members know their constructive suggestions will be taken seriously. For example, they are proud of getting more playground equipment to foster the play and exercise necessary to maintain healthy lifestyles. Year 5 pupils like being members of 'helping hands' teams who give useful administrative support to the school.

Excellent spiritual, moral and social development is a major factor in making pupils' contribution to the school, local and wider communities outstanding. They show compassion towards and understanding of the needs of others. For example, through the number of charities they help and the Year 6 'buddies' scheme which gives highly valued support to Reception children. Cultural development is good. Pupils' awareness

and understanding is enhanced by the school's religious education programme which includes major world religions, assemblies devoted to other faiths, visiting artists from the United Kingdom and other countries and many opportunities to learn and to make music with others. Pupils' good basic skills and very good personal skills prepare them well for the next phase of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school enabling all pupils to learn well and make good progress. Teaching is characterised by good planning that successfully links learning across subjects, very good relationships, high expectations of work and behaviour, and challenging tasks. Teachers use a variety of techniques that arouse and hold the interest of all pupils and make learning enjoyable. Careful questioning enables teachers to check on pupils' learning and helps pupils to know what they have achieved. However, pupils are not always clear about what they are expected to do without additional explanation and this sometimes slows the pace of learning. Teachers' marking, for example of Year 6 work, helps pupils to know how well they have done and often indicates what they need to do to improve. Teaching assistants provide good support, notably for those who have learning difficulties, and for the few pupils for whom English is not the language of the home.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum and is enriched for all pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, by excellent partnerships, for example with local schools, and a wide range of visits and visitors, so enabling all pupils to achieve well. The key to this is the curriculum planning that increasingly enables pupils to consolidate and extend their skills in, for example, emphasis on literacy in other subjects. The display 'voices from the past', where sensitive writing about war and its effects on people links to work in history, illustrates this really well. Pupils make the most of the many opportunities to broaden their experience and skills in activities available out of school. They include a wide range of sports, music, chess, information and communication technology (ICT) and outdoor pursuits at a residential centre. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory because the planned activities for the outside area do not exploit the opportunities to promote skills in all areas of learning. Strong features of the curriculum are the commitment to personal development, enjoyment and preparation for life as young adults.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff know all pupils very well and help them to become good learners. All staff are very highly committed to pupils' safety and welfare. Older pupils enthusiastically confirm that the arrangements for their security and safety are of a high order. For example, staff on duty in the playground carry first aid pouches and walkie-talkie radios. Child protection procedures are appropriate with all staff and governors receiving up-to-date training. The school tracks and analyses pupils' progress and achievement thoroughly and works closely with parents and other agencies to provide prompt support whenever needed. This support ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those who may be gifted or talented and those who learn English as an additional language make good progress in their learning. The school is developing and trying out a new approach to helping each pupil review and improve their progress, but it is not yet implemented in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management throughout the school play a vital part in promoting its Christian ethos and the very positive climate for learning that all children thrive in and enjoy. The headteacher's very effective leadership, clear direction, commitment and determination have improved the school year on year. Governors' dedication and diligent participation ensure that the school is well led, managed and administered. Governors, the headteacher and subject leaders work well in partnership to share their perceptions of all aspects of children's education and accurately evaluate the quality of the school's work. Together, they properly identify areas for development, such as writing. Parents are delighted with the school, especially with their children's progress, and pleased that children enjoy school and feel safe. Almost all are very satisfied with the reports about their children's performance and the information about school life they receive. The headteacher and governors have ensured that the school has successfully addressed all issues raised at the last inspection. The headteacher is unrelenting in working to sustain the continual rise in standards already noted. The capacity for further improvement is good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 the 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?	2

¹ Grade 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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 September 2006

The Pupils

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Garburn Place

Newton Aycliffe

County Durham

DL5 7DE

Dear Pupils

Mr Allinson and I really enjoyed visiting your school on Thursday and Friday last week. Thank you for helping us when we came into your classrooms and your assemblies to see you at work. You were so very polite and helpful. We were very impressed and we especially liked seeing all the things that you do and the way you take part so enthusiastically. We were very impressed with all the lovely work you have displayed in your classrooms, in the hall and around the school. We enjoyed talking to you when we met those of you on the School Council and the 'SNAG'. We were delighted to hear about all your accomplishments and how you help others, such as being a buddy or a member of 'helping hands'. It was great to see how much you enjoy coming to school.

St Joseph's is a good school with a very friendly atmosphere. You are being taught well. You make good progress with your work, especially in mathematics, science and reading although we do think that you could do better in your written work. You are really well behaved, and you have good manners and work hard. You are safe and happy because the adults in the school all look after you very well. Mrs Roberts is an exceptional headteacher, and she and the other teachers and staff are, quite rightly, very proud of you.

We have talked with the governors and Mrs Roberts and asked them to look at ways of helping you improve your writing. We also asked them to give all the children in the Nursery and Reception class a wider range of things to do in the outside play area.

With best wishes to you all

Graeme Clarke

(Lead inspector)