

St John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111675
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	310658
Inspection date	23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Otter
Headteacher	Mrs Julia Rea
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2004
School address	Cowpen Lane Billingham TS23 1LJ
Telephone number	01642 643400
Fax number	01642 643422

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the challenge for more able pupils in science; improvements to the support and progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the impact of the new leadership and management on the effectiveness of the school. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data; the school's own assessment records; a range of school documentation; observation of the school at work; discussions with staff, pupils, and parental questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-sized school serves an area of above average levels of social and economic disadvantage. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible to claim a free school meal is below average. There is a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has recently received a Healthy School Award and an Activemark Award.

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. The school plays a key role in the local community through its involvement with the local church and links with other organisations locally and internationally. All of this contributes to the growing levels of confidence and sense of responsibility shown by the oldest pupils in school. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science and all pupils achieve well based on their low starting points in the Nursery. The school is led well under the capable leadership of the recently appointed headteacher whose vision and commitment are fully appreciated by staff and parents alike. In their response to their questionnaires, parents valued 'the commitment demonstrated by staff and the quick, professional and thoughtful communication' which are at the core of their children's enjoyment and good progress.

Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been consistently above average in the national tests for the past few years. However, standards reached by the more able Year 6 pupils in science and mathematics were below average. Already, swift actions have been taken to tackle this fall through 'booster' support for pupils after school, training for staff, links with the local secondary school to provide greater levels of challenge for more able pupils and the introduction of an assessment scheme. The good leadership of the subjects has played a major part in this recovery. Pupils spoke with passion of their enjoyment in the science club and observed in wonder as they watched water boiling as part of an investigation into scientific changes. A previous priority to improve pupils' writing has also made a good impact on the quality and range of writing and in the recording of scientific investigations. Standards in lessons are above average throughout the school. Basic skills are well developed. Information and communication technology (ICT) is at the heart of much of the pupils' work. Pupils talked knowledgeably of their use of powerpoint presentations; one of which, for example, combined several subjects in a topic on biographical writing.

Improvements to the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are reflected admirably in their good achievement in the most recent national tests. No one is left out in St John's because all pupils are equally valued and provided with good levels of care, guidance and support. Pupils are articulate and take their responsibilities seriously. They are trustworthy and reliable. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils talked enthusiastically about their links with pupils in Africa. An abundance of sporting and curriculum clubs after school further enriches pupils' enjoyment. Pupils know they have to eat healthily. This is well demonstrated in the increased numbers of pupils now having a cooked meal at lunchtime. The school council would like to have more impact on decision-making, just as they did when improvements were made to parts of the school as a result of their suggestions. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know they need to keep fit in order to remain healthy. They are well equipped for their next stage of their education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Actions to improve behaviour have resulted in greater calm in classrooms because what pupils are learning is fun and interesting. Behaviour is good in lessons and around school. The zoning of the playground to enable team games to be apart from other play has lessened incidents of misbehaviour. Good teaching helps pupils to learn because expectations of what pupils have to do are made very clear. Challenging and probing questioning by teachers checks that pupils understand what to do and encourages good contributions from pupils. Older pupils frequently work in groups, each with specific responsibilities. This adds to their developing confidence and pride in their work. Teaching assistants have a key role in the effective support they provide for pupils with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities. Occasionally, pupils are expected to listen for too long. Pupils' work is marked regularly and older pupils know what to do to improve because they have targets to work towards. Parents are generally very pleased with their children's progress.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The headteacher has quickly identified areas for improvement based on a thorough evaluation of pupils' progress in national tests and other assessments completed in school. School self-evaluation is accurate because it is based on a searching analysis. This is well reflected in the good progress made and the beneficial impact this is having on pupils' learning. Plans to tackle weaknesses, such as science in Key Stage 2, are spot on and already there is an obvious improvement in the quality of pupils' work. Systems to appraise the teaching force have been reviewed to achieve a consistency in the school's priorities. Weekly staff briefings are used well to share concerns and tackle any untoward issues. Staff work hard and teamwork is a strong feature, particularly in the Foundation Stage. The governors support the school well. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in reaching the early learning goals in each area of learning by the time they start in Year 1. They achieve above nationally expected levels, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. They play calmly together in the Nursery and benefit from their daily routines linked to days of the week and the weather. Adult led activities are well focused on children's learning and lead to some good independent learning. There are some missed opportunities to record children's learning and to compile an ongoing record of the progress of each child in each area of learning. At times, there is a mismatch between what children are taught and what is planned; for example, when colouring flowers children missed an opportunity to learn the names of shapes. Progress accelerates in the Reception class. A high priority is given to reading and sharing good quality stories that children enjoy. This is contributing well to the children's good progress in literacy skills. There is a good balance between children working independently or with a small group led by an adult. The arrangements to induct children into the Nursery and to visit the Reception class are good. This makes their transition a smooth process and enables children to settle quickly and confidently, and so enjoy the range of activities available inside and outside. Leadership is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish a manageable system to assess progress in the Foundation Stage.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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 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.

Annex A

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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Stockton-on-Tees, TS 23 1LJ

Thank you all for making my day so enjoyable. I only wish I had more time to see all the interesting things you do in school. I really enjoyed hearing about your links with two African countries and the video conferencing that has taken place. Please thank your parents for the comments they sent to me about your school.

You go to a good school. The youngest of you get a good start in the Nursery and Reception class. Your writing on display in your classrooms is brilliant. Throughout the school, you all work hard and are keen to learn, because you have good teachers. As a result, you all make good progress and meet your learning targets. You are working hard to improve in science and I know you all enjoy the practical investigations that take place. All the staff work hard to ensure you enjoy being in school and are safe there. In turn, you care for each other well and you mostly behave very well.

Your school is successful because it is well led by your headteacher and other senior staff. They work hard to make the school better than it already is. I have asked your school to improve the way they check the progress the youngest children make so it is more straightforward for the teachers.

I send you my best wishes for the rest of your time at school.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector