

St Josephs Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111693
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	325433
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2009
Reporting inspector	David Shearsmith

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	144
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin McGrother
Headteacher	Miss Margaret Hodgson
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Musgrave Street (off Tower Street) Hartlepool TS24 7HT
Telephone number	01429 272747
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school that serves a wide area of Hartlepool with mainly below average social and economic indicators. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly above average and an average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many pupils come from Roman Catholic families and most are of White British heritage. A growing number of pupils come from minority ethnic groups or are in the early stages of learning English, mainly from Philippine backgrounds. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has the Healthy Schools award, Activemark and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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 and there are some outstanding features in pupils' personal development and well-being as a result of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding because of the school's particularly caring ethos. This is underpinned by its Christian values; for example, every pupil is valued and is expected to treat others with care and consideration. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school life as shown by their high levels of motivation in learning. They adopt safe and sensible attitudes in lessons and around the school. As a consequence, their behaviour is excellent and pupils flourish in this supportive environment. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including child protection and risk assessment, meet requirements. Pupils are highly aware of how to live healthy lifestyles. Pupils' good attendance reflects their commitment and enthusiasm for all the school has to offer. Pupils take great pride in their role on the school council and in the responsibilities they have around the school. Parents are extremely appreciative of the education and care that the school provides and say that, 'St Josephs is a great place for our children to be'.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities which are well below those typical of children their age and make good progress in their learning. The outcomes of the school's national tests and assessments, together with the school's own tracking data and work seen during the inspection, confirm that pupils make good progress overall throughout the school. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards are slightly above average overall with pupils reaching average standards in mathematics and science and above average standards in English. Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have very good relationships with pupils, which have a very strong impact on their positive attitudes to work. The school checks pupils' progress systematically and provides effective support to meet a variety of needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups or in the early stages of learning English. However, the most able pupils do not always receive sufficient challenge to allow them consistently to reach the highest levels of attainment. Most pupils reach their challenging targets and marking is mostly effective. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to encourage pupils to reflect on how well they are learning and identify how they can ensure that their work improves.

The good curriculum is thoughtfully planned to enrich and stimulate pupils' learning in a variety of ways. Basic skills are developed well and good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise these skills in other subjects of the curriculum. Personal, social and health education is strong and has recently been enhanced by the introduction of the social and emotional aspects of learning programme (SEAL). Opportunities for enriching the curriculum are outstanding. Residential experiences are greatly valued by older pupils and the curriculum is greatly enhanced through a wide range of visits and visitors to promote learning. All these opportunities, combined with visits to experience different cultures and beliefs, prepare pupils well for life in a diverse society.

Leadership and management are good due to strong leadership by the headteacher and a good working partnership with all staff and governors based around the school's vision of, 'We love, live, learn and celebrate together'. As a result, the school's development plans are good and provide focused improvements that have improved the school significantly in science since the last inspection giving good value for money. Community cohesion is good as the school involves itself in many activities that promote links with a range of communities and evaluates its impact.

Governors both support and challenge the school well and carry out their statutory responsibilities conscientiously, giving the school a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter the school with skills and abilities which are significantly below those typical for their age. Their levels of development are particularly low in communication, language and literacy and mathematics. Children make good progress because of the interesting curriculum and the good quality of teaching provided for them. By the time they leave Reception, children generally meet the early learning goals expected for their age although there are still some significant weaknesses in their basic skills. Induction arrangements are very effective and enable children to quickly settle into Nursery. The welfare of the children is promoted extremely well and children respond effectively to the safe, stimulating environment provided for them. Their behaviour and attitudes are excellent. They generally learn to cooperate well with each other and are also able to concentrate well on most tasks. As a result, their personal development is outstanding. All staff work really well as a team and plan very well together to ensure an exciting curriculum with a wide variety of activities for children both indoors and outdoors. Although teachers' use of the outdoor area has developed well, they still plan too few opportunities to explore words and numbers, missing some opportunities to promote children's faster learning. Children are able to work independently, but also respond well to adult directed activities. However, adults do not always make it sufficiently clear what children are learning and help them to begin to evaluate it. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure more able pupils are challenged to reach higher standards, particularly in mathematics.
- Help pupils to identify weaknesses in their work so they can develop their understanding of how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From the time they join the school pupils make good progress and achieve well. Results in the 2008 statutory assessments for Year 2 and Year 6 show that the past decline in results has been halted and standards are now improving. Most pupils entering Year 1 have reached most of the early learning goals, although their performance in communication, language and literacy and mathematics are still not at the level expected. Standards continue to rise in Key Stage 1 with pupils achieving well and reaching standards that are broadly average. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards are just above average overall with pupils reaching average standards in mathematics and science and making particularly good progress in English to reach above average standards. The school exceeded its challenging targets overall and pupils' standards in the current Year 6 show continued improvements. However, more able pupils do not consistently reach the highest levels, particularly in mathematics, due to the limited challenge in some lessons. As a result of very effective support, closely matched to pupils' particular learning needs, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as pupils from minority ethnic groups or are in the early stages of learning English make good progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning as shown by their positive response to lessons and involvement in after-school activities. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils take full responsibility for their own actions, support each other very well and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Playground friends support pupils well at lunchtimes and play times. Pupils are extremely polite and friendly and know what to do if they have a worry or concern. They are happy to approach any member of staff if they need help. Most pupils attend very well and overall attendance is good. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and take every opportunity to take exercise and participate in sporting activities. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community through their links with the local church, other schools and their overall involvement with the community. They appreciate and understand other faiths and cultures, developing an understanding of global communities, through learning about other religions and through their links with a school in Brazil. They raise money for charities, develop their enterprise skills and take responsibility for aspects of school life such as taking assembly. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. By the time they leave school they are well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use good strategies to promote positive attitudes to learning, resulting in pupils who are extremely motivated to learn. Pupils are effectively taught to work well independently, particularly when carrying out practical activities and being involved in investigations. Teachers generally plan lessons to cater well for the pupils' different learning styles and needs to ensure good learning. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to encourage pupils to reflect on how well they are learning and give them advice about how to improve their work. Teachers provide a range of interesting and stimulating activities often using information and communication technology (ICT) which enables pupils to make good progress in their learning. However, in some lessons particularly in mathematics, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to reach their full potential. Although teachers generally have good subject knowledge that they use effectively when questioning pupils, some have more limited mathematical knowledge which restricts their ability to challenge in lessons in this subject. Marking is most effective in English and teachers share with children what they are about to learn ensuring that pupils develop particularly good writing skills. Well qualified teaching assistants provide very good support to pupils in lessons ensuring they make good progress in their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of pupils very well. The school has a strong and successful focus on developing the basic skills. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise skills in these subjects in other areas of the curriculum which enable pupils to make good progress. Recent improvements in provision for ICT have had a significant impact and

pupils' skills are developing well. The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure that pupils develop academically and personally, with many areas being linked to 'Every Child Matters' outcomes and these activities have a significant impact on promoting pupils' personal development. They have strong links with local museums and art galleries and participate in activities such as the Beamish project. The curriculum is greatly enhanced through a wide range of visits and visitors. A Fairtrade Group also plays a significant role in the life of the school enriching pupils' understanding of global community issues. There is a wide variety of after-school clubs, which are outstanding; they are well organised and attended, promoting pupils' enthusiasm and love of lifelong learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils benefit greatly from the outstanding care, guidance and support the school provides. Personal care is a significant strength and pupils say they feel safe and well looked after. This is because the school has a good understanding of how to protect and support pupils' safety and well-being. Very effective measures for safeguarding children are in place, such as those required for child protection, recruiting staff, health and safety and risk assessment for visits and activities that fully meet requirements. The school has very effective procedures for analysing information about pupils' progress to precisely identify any specific difficulties they have. Consequently the school provides sharply focused support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those falling behind. Pupils from minority ethnic groups or who are in the early stages of learning English also make good progress due to the strong support from a wide range of outside agencies. Pupils know their targets and what level of progress they have made.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management successfully promote a strong caring ethos and ensure a positive climate for learning. The headteacher and deputy work closely together, well supported by a good team of subject leaders. Their successful team approach to deal with the issues from the last inspection and successfully develop ICT provision shows that they have good capacity to improve further. Governance is good as new governors have gained a very clear knowledge of the school through an effective partnership with leaders. Their joint approach to reviewing and self-evaluating the school's work gives a clear and accurate picture of how well the school is doing. This has led to significant improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage which is now a strong feature of the school's work. The school recognises the need to raise standards for the more able and has begun to take appropriate action but this has had insufficient time to have an impact. The approach to fostering community cohesion is good because pupils have opportunities to develop a range of community links which allow them to contribute to the local and wider communities.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

11 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School, Hartlepool, TS24 7HT

Thank you for the welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I really enjoyed talking to some of you and finding out about the work you do. Please thank your parents for the comments they sent me about your school. You attend a good school and you work very hard.

You are learning to become confident and are making good progress in your work. Behaviour was excellent during my visit and I was impressed with how well you all get along. You said your lessons and after-school clubs are exciting, and you especially like using computers.

Your teachers all help you to improve your work and give good support to those of you who need more help. I have asked that those of you who already find learning easier are given more challenging work to do in your lessons to ensure you do the very best you can.

You can also help by knowing more about how to improve your learning. I know you will continue to try your best and I hope you continue to enjoy your time at St Josephs RC Primary School and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

David Shearsmith

Lead inspector