

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Murton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114276
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325981
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	104
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 Michael Sawyers
Headteacher	Miss Joanne Jones
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Lane Murton Seaham County Durham SR7 9RD

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Inspection number	325981

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size primary school. It makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The pupils are mostly of White British heritage. There are very few pupils from a minority ethnic background. Most of these pupils are bilingual. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those with a statement of special educational need is below that found nationally. The school has been successful in achieving the Basic Skills Award and the Sports Activemark.

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 some outcomes of its work, notably pupils' personal development, are outstanding. Staff provide high levels of care and support and work closely with other agencies to ensure that all groups of pupils feel safe and secure, particularly the most vulnerable. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning; enthusiastically striving to reach their own high aspirations and the challenging targets set for them. Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Older pupils take a delight in acting as 'buddies' supporting younger children and pride in their roles as school councillors. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils reflect on issues affecting people in other countries and also benefit from the many opportunities for personal reflection in assemblies and church services. Pupils make an excellent contribution to community cohesion through their local, national and global links. For example, locally, through an allotment project and, more globally, through fundraising for their partner schools in Africa. The school has a high reputation within the community. Parents express their delight in the progress their children make and say they would happily recommend the school to others.

Due to the small number of pupils in each year group, standards, as reflected in test results, fluctuate year-on-year. Although children start school in Reception with a wide range of abilities, most enter with skills that are broadly in line with those typical of children of their age. However, communication, literacy, language and social skills are often weaker. Progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, with pupils reaching standards that are above average and sometimes well above average by the end of Year 2. The outcomes of 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, reaching standards that are above average and often well above average by the time they leave Year 6. This represents good achievement from their starting points. A significant factor in this good achievement is that teaching is good. Pupils are given extensive opportunities to be involved in many practical, first-hand activities which cater well for their individual learning needs. They carry out research independently on a wide range of topics through using the school library and also through the good use of information and communication technology. The curriculum is good. It is well planned with a strong emphasis on the development of key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum. Academic guidance is good and pupils understand their targets which give them effective guidance on what they have to do to improve. Although marking indicates what pupils have done well, it does not always indicate how they can improve their work and they are not always given the opportunity to respond to any points for improvement if they are provided.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides dedicated leadership and is held in high regard by the whole school community. The deputy headteacher provides very effective support and together they promote a clear vision for improvement which is well supported by the rest of the staff. Although subject leaders contribute to school self-evaluation and school improvement planning they have not yet had enough opportunities to observe lessons and so gain first hand knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects, partly because some are new to their role. Governance is good. There is a wide range of expertise on the governing body and their skills are used to good effect to contribute to different aspects of the school's development. They have a good understanding and knowledge of the work of the school and effectively challenge the school to improve. The school has made good progress

on the issues identified for improvement in the previous inspection report and as a result of a recent Ofsted visit to look at provision in information and communication technology. Overall the school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. They are taught alongside children in Year 1 in a mixed age class. Children enter the school with a wide range of skills and abilities which are broadly typical for their age. However, their communication, literacy, language and social skills are limited. They quickly settle into school because induction procedures are effective. This is because staff have good relationships with the local pre-school provision from which pupils transfer. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is well planned and teaching is directed effectively to meet children's individual needs. This ensures that children make good progress in their Reception year. Children benefit from learning through play supported by teaching and support staff within the mixed age class. The outdoor play area has been completed and there are now more opportunities for pupils to practise their skills both outdoors and indoors. As a result, pupils are now making better progress particularly in their physical, social and language development. This is demonstrated by the wonderful role play seen during the inspection, including opportunities for developing writing, speaking, listening and numeracy skills in the newly constructed play house which is currently a Post Office. Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development because of the very good care and support they receive. Welfare arrangements are promoted well by staff. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further the role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the work in their subjects, particularly through lesson observations.
- Ensure that all pupils consistently receive clear advice on how to improve through regular comments on their marked work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

This is a small school and the number of pupils in each cohort is small. Consequently, results can fluctuate year-on-year. Standards reached by pupils are above average overall and their achievement is good. Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical of children their age and, by the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils reach above average standards and some well above. More pupils than nationally reach the higher Level 3 in reading. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards in mathematics and science have been above average and often well above average over time. Standards in English have fluctuated in recent years, but are mainly above average, demonstrating good progress from pupils' starting points. Although standards in English dipped in 2007 to below average because a higher proportion than usual had learning difficulties, these pupils made good progress. Provisional results for 2008 and pupils' current work demonstrate that standards have risen again. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

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 energetic and enthusiastic participation in lessons and after-school activities. Pupils take responsibility for their own actions, support each other very well and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They know what to do if they have a worry or concern and are happy to approach any member of staff if they need help. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are extremely polite and friendly. Enjoyment for school is demonstrated by pupils' regular and improving attendance. Although the school is taking appropriate steps to improve attendance even further, this is hampered by a small proportion of families taking holidays during term time.

Pupils have a very good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and relish opportunities to take exercise and participate in sporting activities such as swimming, football and basketball. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community through their links with the local church, other schools and a local nursing home for the elderly. They grow plants to sell in the community which is helping to develop their enterprise skills and participate in performances through dance and singing. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as demonstrated by excellent links with the parish church, where pupils participate in mass and church celebrations which greatly promote their spiritual development. There are also valuable opportunities for prayer and reflection in collective worship and in lessons. Pupils appreciate and understand other faiths and cultures through learning about other religions, participating in local events, for example a Festival of Light and Chinese New Year celebrations and through their links with African schools.

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 exemplary behaviour in lessons and pupils who are highly motivated. Pupils are able to work well independently, particularly when carrying out practical activities and being involved in research. Teachers provide a range of interesting and stimulating activities which are well matched to the needs of individual pupils in the mixed age classes and this enables pupils to make good progress in their learning. Literacy and numeracy skills are also used effectively in other subjects enabling pupils to practise their skills, for example in writing in different styles and for different purposes. There are lots of practical, first hand activities particularly in mathematics and science which cater for the different learning styles of pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and ask probing questions which promote pupils' thinking skills. Well-qualified teaching assistants provide 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 strong focus on developing the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology

and the many opportunities for pupils to practise skills in these subjects in other areas of the curriculum enable pupils to make good progress. The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure that pupils develop academically and personally with many areas being linked to 'Every Child Matters' outcomes. Pupils benefit greatly from the enterprise project where they grow and eat their own vegetables and raise money from selling them. They develop their cultural awareness through links with schools in Malawi and Zimbabwe in partnership with other local primary schools. These activities have a significant impact on promoting pupil's personal development. The curriculum is greatly enhanced through a wide range of visits and visitors, for example art and music workshops. The wide variety of after-school clubs, which are well attended, include opportunities for family learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good with some aspects which are outstanding. The school's arrangements for the care and support of its pupils are excellent and academic guidance is good. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements and procedures for health and safety are very well managed. There are excellent arrangements in place to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils' own views are that they feel very well cared for and they are confident in the school's anti-bullying procedures. Younger pupils particularly appreciate the support of the Year 6 'buddies' when they start school and there are very good links with local nursery providers. Similarly, there are highly effective arrangements in place for Year 6 pupils to transfer to the next stage of their education. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are fully included in all the school offers. The school works highly effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive the support they need.

Academic guidance is good. Pupils understand their targets and are effectively involved in reviewing their progress in achieving them. Tracking systems are used well to identify any pupils who are underachieving and appropriate support is provided for them enabling them to make better progress. Marking does not always provide pupils with enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well as a team and are determined to ensure that the school equips pupils well for the challenges of the future. They have a clear vision for school improvement which is widely shared among governors, teachers and others who work in the school. They monitor the work of the school well through lesson observations and looking at planning and pupils' work that result in helpful feedback to teachers. Some subject leaders are new to their roles and have not yet had enough opportunities to monitor and evaluate the work in their subjects, particularly through lesson observations. However, they are keen to contribute to raising achievement in their subjects and have been involved in some aspects of self-evaluation and school improvement planning. School self-evaluation is effective as staff know pupils very well as individuals and have a good understanding of their needs. The school has taken effective steps to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Opportunities for writing have improved as pupils are able to practise their skills in other subjects in the curriculum requiring them to write

in different styles and for different purposes. There is now an attractive and stimulating outdoor play area for younger children which is enhancing opportunities for learning.

Governors provide effective challenge and monitor the work of the school well through their links with curriculum leaders and regular visits. They meet their statutory duties well and have high expectations of themselves and others. Induction arrangements for new governors are thorough and supportive.

The school has very good links with parents and the local community, including the local parish church and there are excellent links with schools in Africa which enable the school to make an outstanding contribution to community cohesion.

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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?	1
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?	2
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	2
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?	2

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?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Murton, Durham,

SR7 9RD

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school when I came to visit. I enjoyed talking to you in lessons and around school. Please thank your parents for sending in the questionnaires and let them know I have taken all their views into account. This is a good school. Your achievement is good and the standards you reach are above average and often well above average. This is because teaching is good. Here are some of the things that are strengths of the school.

- Your behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around the school.
- You are very polite and friendly and you show care and support for each other.
- You work very hard in lessons and are able to work well independently when you carry out experiments or research into different topics.
- The staff look after you very well and you know you can talk to them if you have a problem.
- You make an outstanding contribution to the community through your work in the allotment, your links with schools in Malawi and Zimbabwe and in helping the elderly in a local nursing home.
- Your headteacher, governors and all staff are very dedicated and committed to making sure that you all receive the best possible education.

There are some things which I feel would help to improve your school. I have asked the teachers to make helpful suggestions when they mark your work to help you to improve even further. I have also asked that all subject leaders observe lessons in other classrooms, so they can check how well you are learning.

I would like to ask your parents to make sure you all come to school every day because some of you go on holiday during term time. This means that some of you miss valuable opportunities for learning.

You can help by working hard and by making sure you come to school every day.

Thank you for your help and the best of luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster

Her Majesty's Inspector