

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108508
Local Authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	337095
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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 of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Dick
Headteacher	Miss E Mathews
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with senior leaders, governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and analysed 52 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, 77 questionnaire responses from pupils and nine questionnaire responses from staff. The team also looked at the pupils' progress data the school had collected and the school improvement plan, and scrutinised pupils' work and reports from the School Improvement Partner.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the current achievement and attainment of all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language
- the quality of provision and standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how effectively community cohesion is promoted
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in maintaining a strong focus on achievement in learning.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average Catholic primary school with an increasing roll. It is situated in an area of high deprivation to the west of the centre of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The school has an increasingly diverse population with just over half the pupils from a White British background and the remainder from minority ethnic groups. These are mainly Asian and African and a small number of asylum seekers and economic migrants from European and Middle East backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average with the number arriving understanding no English continuing to rise. The proportion eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Joseph's is a good and improving school. It has some outstanding features. Pupils are very proud of their school and really do enjoy the 'buzz' of school life. The excellent leadership of the headteacher ensures that all pupils are exceptionally well cared for, are known as individuals and are motivated to make good progress. All thrive in a rich, nurturing atmosphere bolstered by Christian family values. Overall, pupils' behaviour is excellent with older pupils demonstrating very responsible and considerate attitudes. A very large proportion of parents and carers are supportive and all appreciate the happy, friendly atmosphere, which is especially found in the Nursery and Reception.

Pupils make good progress from exceptionally low start points to reach broadly average standards by the time they leave school. This is because of the positive climate for learning and the good teaching and support. After the 'flying start' in the Nursery and Reception the rate of progress does slow a little in Years 1 and 2 then speeds up, especially in Years 5 and 6. Strategies adopted by the school to improve literacy and numeracy skills are raising standards. However, standards in science, though improving, are below average. This is because of pupils' insufficient grasp of scientific language. The school acknowledges that pupils' scientific vocabulary is underdeveloped which in turn hinders pupils' analytical thinking and problem solving. Pupils needing additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities or extra language support make the same good progress as their classmates. This is because close attention is paid to their needs and they are fully involved in all activities.

In those lessons where most progress is made, lively, exciting teaching challenges pupils' thinking. For example when pupils were asked to write imaginatively about witches in the style of Shakespeare. Regular opportunities are planned to probe pupils' thinking with open-ended questions. Staff know pupils exceptionally well and check progress frequently, which ensures that pupils keep on track. Where learning slows a little, planning does not always take sufficient account of each pupil's learning needs and stage of development. Consequently, tasks are not sufficiently well matched to quicken progress, especially in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Pupils are taught to respect and value each other's differences from an early age. Excellent relationships are a feature of all interaction in the school. The responsible and sensible attitudes of pupils mean that they are able to get the most out of opportunities to work as a team or independently. The excellent behaviour, especially of older pupils, is the result of high expectations, clear routines and skilled classroom management. Members of the school council take great pride in their decision-making role in 'helping to make the school a better place'. For example, they have established allotment facilities in the school grounds. The school has worked diligently to reduce persistent

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absence to average levels, despite the sometimes limited cooperation from a very small number of families.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, which contributes to the good capacity for continued improvement. Since the last inspection, they have sustained achievement gains, managed further improvement and accurately identified actions for the future. They are ably supported by a committed and skilled team of staff. Strategies to check the progress of pupils are effective and the school monitoring of outcomes for pupils rigorous, for example checking the implementation and success of initiatives in mathematics since the last inspection. Governors provide good support and challenge. They are very conscious of the benefits of playing an active part in holding the school to account. Strong links with a wide range of agencies provides additional specialist support for individual pupils and their families. These partnerships have a significant impact on the well-being and progress pupils make.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help to accelerate the rate of progress in Key Stage 1 for all pupils by:
 - organising more stimulating play-based learning
 - providing more focused real and motivating opportunities for speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Raise achievement and attainment in science by:
 - ensuring that all pupils acquire a better understanding of scientific language to improve their analysis of experiments and problems.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are keen to learn and make good progress in the vast majority of lessons. An increasing number of pupils understand no English and sometimes take time to settle into school routines. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who enter school at other than the normal times during the year make good progress because their support is carefully tailored to their needs.

In the 2008 national tests, pupils made satisfactory progress from their starting points. Standards fell, especially in science, to below average. This was the consequence of more pupils arriving in Years 3 to 6, often understanding no English, and a higher proportion on behaviour management programmes. The school's analysis of 2009 tests and evidence from classroom observations during the inspection confirm that standards are much improved. Standards are average in English and mathematics and below average in science. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels matches the national average in English and mathematics and is close to the average in science. Determined efforts since the last inspection have boosted skills in literacy and numeracy and the more able pupils are better equipped to solve complex problems. This has had a positive influence throughout the school. Parents and carers speak highly of the quality

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of learning support provided for their children.

Pupils understand the importance of a balanced diet and regular exercise. A range of fitness and sporting activities, including dance and aerobics, are regular features of school life. Peer massage for pupils helps them relax and concentrate better. Healthy lunches are promoted in partnership with parents and carers. A strong sense of family, underpinned by consideration and mutual respect, is fostered in school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and evident in the quality of the relationships with one another. Pupils report that they feel very safe. They are confident that staff are always on hand to listen and share any worries or concerns. They use the 'feelings box' if necessary. Pupils are encouraged from an early age to take roles of responsibility such as talk partners and to train to become 'visible' Junior Street Wardens in the local community. Pupils willingly raise money for charity and are conscious of the plight of Third World countries desperate for food and water aid. They have an excellent grasp of their own faith together with the beliefs and cultures of their classmates. They celebrate a variety of festivals as well as their own, for example joining activities at the nearby mosque. The strong emphasis the school places on these aspects of personal development is encouraged and well supported by the curriculum.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

A talented, hard-working team of staff create a rich climate for learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge aids thoughtful lesson planning to provide a good range of activities. In most lessons there is a good match of activities to the different abilities and language needs of pupils. However, tasks and activities in Year 1 do not always take sufficient account of the wide range of pupils' developmental needs. In the most effective learning, probing questions, clear explanations and well-timed activities with variety and pace keep pupils engaged and keen to participate. New technology is used to add to the interest. Teaching assistants are usually well deployed, particularly to support early language and reading development. Teachers provide pupils with good ongoing oral and written feedback about their progress and the next steps to improve. Older pupils are familiar with their target levels and how to achieve them, for example 'I have to use more adventurous words' to gain a higher level.

The good curriculum places firm emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills while ensuring that pupils' interest is maintained. A range of opportunities foster creative skills, for example playing a range of wind and brass instruments and painting landscapes in the style of Japanese artists. Spanish has been successfully introduced throughout the school. Pupils appreciate the range of interesting activities provided outside of lessons, including their residential experience. Strong links with local secondary schools ensure that pupils broaden their experiences for later learning, such as joining in the 'big sing' and completing practical projects in science and technology. However, opportunities for play-based learning and motivating role play in the style of early years are limited after transfer from Reception.

Pupils demonstrate a keen sense of belonging. Staff have an excellent knowledge of individuals and their family circumstances and this is reflected in the high quality of care, guidance and support for all pupils. The work the school does in easing the youngest children's arrival into the Nursery and older pupils' transfer into secondary school is excellent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has established a crystal clear vision and an unmistakable direction for the school. All the staff and governors share her

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ambition and are totally committed to continued improvement and raising achievement. The whole school is very aware of the steadily changing make-up of the school and the challenges this presents. Curriculum leadership has been strengthened and as confidence develops leaders' impact increases. Governors provide good support and challenge and are aware of the benefits of being more evaluative in their approaches. The school's work with a wide range of agencies to support the development and well-being of pupils is outstanding. Safeguarding meets requirements and the school adopts recommended good practice in all areas of work. Child protection arrangements, including training, are particularly robust. Issues of safety are well integrated into pupils' learning. The school promotes equality exceptionally well and this is illustrated in the way all groups are fully included, the harmonious atmosphere around the school and pupils' good progress. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. Pupils contribute well to the local and wider community and have a good understanding of global diversity. The school enjoys excellent relationships with parents and carers, including those who are sometimes reluctant to engage with school. School resources are used effectively to support its work and provide good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery because of the warm, motivating atmosphere and the high quality of care they receive. Staff work tirelessly to make certain that no child is left out of activities. Children's learning, welfare and language needs are quickly identified and supported so that they can learn and progress

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confidently. Children are provided with a good range of appropriate, interesting and enjoyable activities to develop their independence. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Imaginative teaching and effective support make sure that all children achieve as well as they possibly can. This includes those newly arrived in the country who understand no English. Imaginative use of outdoor space provides opportunities for children to explore, investigate and experiment, for example playing with the water feature and watching vegetables grow in their mini allotment. The high expectations for personal development ensure that all children settle into routines, for example sitting on the carpet and washing their hands after painting or visiting the toilet. Although outdoor routines are safe, risk checking requires systematic review in view of the split levels on the site. Behaviour is excellent once children settle into their routines. A firm speaking and listening focus helps children's thinking and early introduction into reading and writing. Celebration of cultural differences among the children introduces them to the diverse world in which they live. The provision is well led and effective teamwork is fostered very well, for example in imaginatively developing outdoor learning in a Victorian building on a challenging site. Rigorous checking of each child's progress is well established and used effectively to guide planning, boost progress and keep parents and carers well informed of their children's achievements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

In their responses to the questionnaire the great majority of parents and carers were very positive about the school. Parents and carers appreciate the high quality of care the staff provide and the school's efforts to get to know the needs of each individual child and the child's family. The Nursery and Reception received much praise for the manner in which they settled children, many of whom find routines difficult to manage and some of whom are newly arrived in the community. A very small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about the management of unacceptable behaviour. While the inspectors did recognise that a few individual pupils, especially younger pupils, did display some immature actions, staff management of behaviour is highly effective. As pupils mature, this results in exemplary behaviour characterised by thoughtful, considerate attitudes in calm, orderly classrooms and responsible behaviour at playtimes

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's RC Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 194 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	74	26	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	69	32	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	58	56	42	40	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	54	44	42	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	66	64	36	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	49	50	49	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	47	52	50	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	44	44	54	53	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	51	44	44	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	50	38	38	6	6	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	40	52	52	2	2	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	50	49	50	49	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	71	28	27	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE15 6JB

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time at St Joseph's, particularly the discussions we had with you. Your school provides a good and improving education. I would like to tell you about some of the good things about your school.

- The staff look after you and care for you exceptionally well and help you all to make good progress in your learning, especially in your reading and writing.
 - Your behaviour and enjoyment of school life are impressive and this is reflected in your improving attendance.
 - You know how to stay safe, keep fit and healthy.
 - The school enjoys really good relationships with your parents and carers and there are excellent partnerships with other schools and support agencies.
 - You have an excellent headteacher and a hard-working and dedicated team of staff.
- By the time you leave school, the standards you reach are in line with the average expected for your age. To help your school get even better and make sure you achieve higher standards, we have asked for some improvements to be made. These will make sure that:

- your work in Year 1 involves more play-based work and role play which will challenge you to improve your speaking and listening but is not too easy or too hard
- all of you improve the quality of your work in science and reach even higher standards by learning the important scientific words so that you can describe your thinking and testing more accurately.

You can play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can.

Thank you for helping with this inspection. We hope the school will keep on building on its many strengths.

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