

St Joseph's Washington RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108850
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	309817
Inspection date	28 April 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	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Jakeway
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Bartley
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2005
School address	Village Lane Washington Tyne and Wear NE38 7HU
Telephone number	0191 2193805
Fax number	0191 2193809

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: improvements to achievement and the quality of teaching in Year 2 and the impact of the headteacher and deputy headteacher on raising standards and improving behaviour. Evidence was gathered from: discussions with pupils in Year 6, the headteacher, the chair of governors; observations of parts of lessons; an analysis of school documentation and its self-evaluation document; samples of pupils' work and the parental questionnaire returns. 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 is an average sized primary school situated in a mixed area. A very small proportion of pupils are eligible for a free school meal. Most pupils are White British. There is a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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 is a good school. It is successfully living up to its mission statement to 'build an atmosphere which is welcoming to children, parents, staff, visitors and members of the community'. The headteacher makes an impressive impact on improving pupils' behaviour because of a popular rewards system and recent reorganisation of the classes. Parents praise the 'open door' policy of the school and greatly appreciate the informative newsletters and range of after-school and lunchtime activities. The recently appointed deputy headteacher provides a strong level of support and provides a clear drive and high level of efficiency in introducing a consistent approach to assessment and target-setting.

Based on starting points which are below expectations on entry to the Nursery, pupils achieve well by the time they leave school in Year 6. Standards are slightly above average in English, mathematics and science, although overall standards in English have fallen for the past three years because of weaknesses in writing. The leadership is tackling this fall very effectively. This includes training for staff, the introduction of single age classes and detailed analysis of past test results. As a result, pupils in need of additional help are identified, and have appropriate and effective support. The introduction of a new scheme is beginning to make a marked impact too on teachers' understanding of how to teach writing. The influence of this is particularly evident in the improvements to standards in writing in Years 5 and 6, although less so in other year groups. Standards in Year 2 are improving because of the improvements in teaching, and are broadly average. Current standards in reading are much better than they were. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Recent actions to identify and provide support for children underachieving at the end of the Foundation Stage are beginning to have a good impact on improving achievement overall in Key Stage 1.

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well fostered and benefits well from the daily whole school assembly. Pupils enjoy school particularly the enrichment days and all the sporting and keep fit opportunities they say help to keep them fit. Eagerness and enjoyment of school are well reflected in the excellent attendance levels. Older pupils and the school council have key responsibilities that equip them well for their roles in later life. Pupils are fully aware of the importance of protecting the environment and learn about this through the well attended 'gardening gang' club and the regular recycling timetable. Behaviour is good as a result of steps to rectify minor incidents of misbehaviour. Parents are fulsome in the praise of the school for the way in which their children are helped to develop into well rounded, sensitive and thoughtful young people. Pupils say they feel safe and value the friendliness of everyone in and around school.

The quality of teaching is good. Explanations are clear and pupils understand what to do because learning objectives are shared and explained; for example, the effective recall of a personal event helped pupils understand 'dilemmas' and 'issues'. The pace of learning is constantly brisk, probing questioning checks that pupils understand. All teaching makes good use of whiteboard technology and in English lessons the use of visual prompts to support writing is very good. Displays in classrooms are vibrant and are a good reflection of the topics that are studied as well as providing useful guidance on how to improve pupils' writing. Teaching assistants have a valuable role to play across the school supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Strategies to involve pupils in self-assessment are good and developing well in most classes. However, there is inconsistency in the marking of pupils' work so they do not

always have sufficient guidance on how to improve or make reference to whether targets have been met or not. The good curriculum is enriched well by the use of visiting sports specialists and themed days to enhance learning, such as the opportunity to learn about the customs of the Chinese culture. Care, guidance and support are good. The systems to check the health and safety of pupils are applied diligently. Safeguarding requirements are fully met.

Leadership and management are good. The clear and incisive school self-evaluation is a good indicator of the leadership team's secure awareness of key weaknesses across the school. It accurately reflects the rigorous monitoring and analysis completed by the senior management team. It is particularly noteworthy that there is already a beneficial impact on improvement to behaviour and standards, particularly in Key Stage 1. Actions to raise standards in English and provide consistency in assessment procedures are beginning to make a good impact, although more inconsistently in writing. Target-setting is realistic and uses the analysis of results and progress year-by-year effectively to ensure accuracy. Good steps are taken to reduce the gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils. Targets were met in 2007. Governors are supportive and rightly debate decisions to improve resources to ensure good value for money. The rigour of self-evaluation demonstrated admirably the school's good capacity to improve. Improvements since the last inspection are good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality and provision in the Foundation Stage are good. The Nursery and Reception class work as two separate classes and share an adequately resourced outdoor area. There are plans to develop this in the near future. A high priority is given to promoting basic skills which are well reflected in the good quality displays in each classroom. Children start in the Nursery with standards that are below those typical for their age, especially in speech and language development. They make good progress and many achieve within the early learning goals by the time they go into Year 1. Teaching is good. Staff are skilled in extending children's play and encouraging confidence in early writing. Never a moment is lost to encourage drawing; for example, a child boldly pinned up a drawing of the model he made and proudly read out his early attempts at writing his name. Children make good progress and achieve within the nationally expected levels in all areas of learning apart from creative development by the time they leave the Reception class. Children are well cared for and parents praise the excitement and enjoyment provided for their children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of marking so that pupils know what to do to improve their work.

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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	3
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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Washington RC School, Sunderland, NE38 7HU

Thank you for the welcome I received when visiting your school recently. It was very interesting to talk to some of you and find out about all the exciting things you do in school. Please say thank you to your parents on my behalf; their comments about your school were very helpful. Your school is good.

You work hard and are keen to learn. You are making good progress and enjoy learning, especially when your teachers use the interactive whiteboards. The encouragement you are given is helping to equip you well for later life. Your basic skills are developing well and you have many good personal qualities. The care, guidance and support you receive are good. As a result, you become confident and feel safe and happy in school. You all like the daily morning prayer. Behaviour is good around school. Your teachers are hard working and very well led by your headteacher and deputy headteacher.

I have asked that you continue to improve your writing and be helped by having comments written in your books so that you to know what to do to improve your work. You can help by reading the comments in your books and continue to use the very good displays in your classroom if you do not understand what to do.

Thank you all again for the warm welcome you gave me. Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector