

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sunderland

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 108841 |
| Local Authority | Sunderland |
| Inspection number | 324845 |
| Inspection date | 7 October 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Rosemary Rodger |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 287 |
| 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 John Ford |
| Headteacher | Mrs Maureen Galbraith |
| 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 | Rutland Street Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR4 6HY |
| Telephone number | 0191 5537725 |
| Fax number | 0191 5537727 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
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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 effectiveness of leaders and managers in evaluating the school's performance and their contribution to ensuring further improvement
- the effectiveness of the strategies used to ensure that all pupils, particularly pupils with English as an additional language, achieve as well as they can
- the impact of actions to improve the teaching of writing.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior leadership team, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) leader and a group of Year 6 pupils. In addition, parts of lessons were observed, school documents, samples of pupils' work and the parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

This above average sized primary school is situated close to the centre of Sunderland. The area it serves is mixed socially and economically. The majority of pupils are White British and about third of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. They are mainly Indian with some Filipinos and a small number of Polish pupils. An above average number of pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. A small proportion of pupils is eligible for a free school meal. A below average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The EYFS comprises a Nursery class and two Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Leadership and management have worked hard and successfully in recent years to integrate an increase in the diversity of cultures in the pupil population. As a result, everyone shares a common sense of belonging that celebrates the differences between individuals. The school has a strong role in promoting shared values and encourages pupils actively to engage with others. This was admirably reflected in discussions with indigenous pupils who proudly described how much more they now understood about the customs of other cultures.

Despite recent staff changes and a new senior leadership team, there is a strong team in place who are making a difference on many fronts. For example, steps to improve marking pupils' work and giving useful feedback are now consistent across the school. Parents praise the approachability of the headteacher and staff and the enthusiasm their children have for school. As minority ethnic pupils said, 'We enjoy working with friends and sometimes being able to speak our home language in school.' White British pupils value learning about the culture and traditions of India. A displayed caption, 'We are all one family under one sky' captures the caring and inclusiveness that permeate the school.

Pupils achieve well given their starting points in the Nursery, which are below those typically expected for their age. The provisional results of the 2008 national tests by Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science. The school has exceeded its targets. An above average number of pupils reached the higher levels in all three subjects. These results are typical of the results reached in national tests for the past few years. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and learning English as an additional language achieve particularly well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. However, the school recognises that the standard of pupils' work in lessons does not always match that of the test results. They are currently working to improve this. The inspection confirms that sometimes opportunities to apply good writing skills across the curriculum are limited.

Pupils' personal, development and well-being are good. Behaviour in and around the school is excellent. 'There is no bullying in this school,' said a forthright Year 6 pupil. Pupils are confident, able to work independently and form good relationships with their peers. Older pupils have some key responsibilities around school and care for younger pupils in their buddy role. They understand the importance of eating healthily and keeping fit. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance levels. They say they feel safe in school. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the local and wider community through Christmas performances and various fund-raising events. The display of anti-litter posters in the community is a noteworthy example. Pupils are well prepared for their later lives because of the opportunities the school provides for them to take responsibility and develop good basic skills.

The quality of teaching is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There are several consistently good teaching practices, such as sharing and explaining learning intentions, using whiteboard technology to demonstrate what is to be learned, and praising pupils for their contributions. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility by using dictionaries, thesauri and correcting their own work. Vast improvements to the quality of marking mean that pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve. At times, there are missed opportunities for pupils to write independently. Displays are informative and showcase pupils' work to good effect in

most classes. The curriculum is good. A recent initiative to teach a more creative curriculum is developing well. Two year groups combine to learn about a subject-based topic, such as Arabian Knights in Key Stage 1 and the Victorians in upper Key Stage 2. This is developing, but the opportunities to apply the pupils' good basic skills are limited. A number of after-school clubs satisfactorily enrich the curriculum. This situation is improving and there is a surfeit of pupils wishing to attend clubs that have started very recently. Younger pupils formed a 'garden gang' and work in the local community. Pupils' care, guidance and support are good. The school makes particularly good use of external agencies to support and improve the provision for pupils learning to speak English. Assessment arrangements are robust and are used effectively to monitor pupils' rate of progress year by year.

Leadership and management are good. Governors are fully involved in the school and provide an effective link to the local community by supporting weekend activities and supporting the school's development. The headteacher shows strong determination in seeking to move the school forward. All staff work together well and teamwork is strong, despite the limitations of the building. The school self-evaluation is too modest in some respects and has not given itself enough credit for the improvements made since the previous inspection or for the impact of the considerable external support provided for literacy, numeracy and the EYFS. The inspection has judged the school to be better than it has judged itself. Subject leadership is good. Leaders have action plans they are systematically working through. Useful training has taken place and they all have clear aims as to how to improve their areas of responsibility. They also lead by the example of their good teaching and sometimes outstanding teaching. A focus on improving the marking of the pupils' work is an example an outcome of effective monitoring. The headteacher's knowledge of the strengths and areas for development of her staff is particularly perceptive and accurate. The school provides good value for money and has made good improvements since the last inspection. It has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. Recent actions to improve the liaison between the two Reception classes means they plan and work together well, sharing a developing outdoor area. The Nursery occupies a less favourable location, but is adequate for the children because of its spaciousness and its well resourced outdoor area. Children start in the Nursery with skills that are below those typically expected for their age in all areas of learning, but more so in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress and by the end of the Reception class are generally achieving broadly average standards. Teaching is good overall, although variable between the two sites. Well resourced areas for independent learning lead to purposeful play and good development of basic communication skills. Children's learning is effectively extended in planned adult-led activities alongside children learning independently. Smelling and touching vegetables were helping younger children learn the names of common vegetables. Whole class sessions in the Nursery are less effective because sometimes too little account is taken of the needs of the high proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language. Leadership is good. The EYFS has been well supported in moving the provision forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations of the quality and quantity of writing across the curriculum.
- Provide children with English as an additional language in the EYFS with small group activities to help them to learn English.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| 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

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| 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? | 2 |
| 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

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| 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

Annex A

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|---|---|
| How good are 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 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| 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

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| 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

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| 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

8 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sunderland, SR4 6HY

Thank you all for the welcome you gave me when I inspected your school recently. I enjoyed talking to some of you and finding out about all the exciting things you learn in school. You attend a good school. I am listing below the strengths of your school.

Everyone works hard and your behaviour is excellent. As a result, you achieve well in the national tests by the time you leave school and make good progress in lessons.

Your teachers make learning interesting and use the whiteboards well to demonstrate, for example, lively story openers.

You are confident and enjoy school. Those of you I spoke too talked enthusiastically about how you all get on well together and enjoy learning about each others cultures.

You have many chances to take part in all kinds of after-school clubs as well as learning about eating healthily and leading a healthy lifestyle.

I have asked your school to make the following aspects even better.

To make sure that the good writing you produce in literacy lessons and in the national tests is just as good when you are writing in other lessons, such as history and geography.

To provide some of the youngest children with lots of small-group activities to encourage them to learn English words.

Good luck and continue to enjoy you time at St Joseph's school.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector