

St John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111675
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	356963
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Nimmo
Headteacher	Julia Rea
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed the work of nine teachers in the school during short visits to parts of lessons and extended visits to 13 lessons. They watched a drama performance and school nativity plays. They examined a variety of examples of pupils' written work. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, teachers and a group of pupils. They scrutinised the school's child protection and safeguarding documentation, information about the curriculum, development plans, records of pupils' progress and minutes of meetings. They analysed 54 questionnaires from parents and carers, 93 from pupils in Key Stage 2 and nine from members of staff.

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

- The progress pupils make, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- The development of reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The strength of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The consistency of teaching, particularly of writing, throughout the school.
- How effectively the new leadership team is bringing about and sustaining school improvement.

Information about the school

St John the Evangelist is an average-sized primary school where about half of the pupils come from Catholic families. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. A lower-than-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and none has a statement of special educational needs. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The school has gained Healthy School status, the Activemark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the foundation level International Schools award.

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

Pupils receive a good education in this improving school. Almost all aspects of its work are good as a result of effectively led and managed initiatives. The headteacher and staff successfully foster a caring ethos and promote its Catholic values of consideration, respect and support throughout. The leadership team's effective self-evaluation provides an agenda for improvement and focuses sharply on appropriate priorities to raise attainment. Their determination to improve teaching is paying dividends in the form of above average attainment, good learning and good progress. The school has a good capacity for further improvement to the next level.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, although progress slows in Key Stage 1, it accelerates rapidly in Key Stage 2. This is because of the outstanding way the school prevents any discrimination by very assiduously ensuring all groups of pupils are helped to do equally well. Pupils participate wholeheartedly and industriously in lessons and thoroughly enjoy learning. Attainment in Year 6 has risen year-on-year to above average. A concerted effort to improve writing is particularly successful. Mathematics, too, has improved. The school rightly recognises the need to consolidate these improvements.

Pupils say they feel safe as a result of the school's stringent arrangements to safeguard their welfare. Pupils generally behave well and the school is calm and orderly. Staff effectively manage the conduct of a small number of pupils who behave inappropriately and ensure that others are able to make good progress. Pupils are well aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Good opportunities enable pupils to take on responsibilities in school and participate in local community activities. They develop skills, maturity and confidence which prepare them well for their future lives. Well-organised activities successfully promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teaching quality is generally good but is not consistent throughout the school, especially in the way teachers use assessment information to plan activities for pupils and to give them pointers to help them improve. Good quality care, guidance and support underpin the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Work within the curriculum enhances their reading, writing, numeracy and computer skills in all subjects and gives pupils good opportunities to grasp the cultural diversity within the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate arrangements to ensure pupils make good progress throughout the school and sustain above average attainment in writing and mathematics by:
 - drawing on the expertise and successful approaches experienced teachers use to increase the quality and consistency of teaching
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information to design activities in lessons that are carefully matched to pupils' abilities and are structured sufficiently to enable pupils to meet the demands made of them
 - improving the quality of marking so it is consistently rigorous and includes pointers for improvement to help pupils move on to the next level.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy taking part in lessons where they are motivated to work industriously and productively, for example, when writing at length and creating work of good quality. They happily participate in questioning and discussion and contribute enthusiastically in lessons and group activities. Of particular note is the confident and articulate way they speak to adults, their classmates and a large audience in the hall. Their handwriting skills are well developed and they take great care to present their written and mathematical work neatly. Pupils' achievement and enjoyment of school are good.

Most children begin the Nursery class with abilities that are lower than those expected for their age, particularly in aspects of their personal development and their language skills. They make good progress and begin Year 1 with levels of attainment at or above the average. Pupils' attainment in the Key Stage 1 national tests has fallen as a result of unavoidable staff changes. Over the last three years attainment in mathematics, and especially in English, has risen. By Year 6, pupils' progress improves greatly. Last year, attainment in both English and mathematics was above average and the school met its challenging targets. Boys and girls made equally good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress. Notably, all higher attaining pupils fulfilled their potential to reach the highest levels. Pupils presently are making sound progress in mathematics and writing throughout the school. They speak clearly and confidently, and work well together.

Pupils feel safe in school and are in no doubt why procedures for safe conduct should be followed. They are polite and courteous. Voluntary physical activities after school are popular and pupils clearly know about the importance of diet, hygiene and exercise for health. Through an effective school council and as volunteers who undertake jobs around the school; pupils help make an admirable contribution to their school. Pupils make a good contribution to the lives of others in their locality, for example, the delightful singing by the choir is much appreciated. Pupils' well-developed basic and social skills, coupled with a pattern of above-average attendance, effectively pave the way for the next steps in their education.

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	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching results in pupils' good learning and progress. Where teaching is at its best, an effective combination of clear learning intentions, well-planned, interesting activities and lively questioning sustains pupils' interest, encourages active involvement and leads them to work with commendable endeavour. In such lessons, pupils learn well, they work responsibly on their own or in pairs and contribute much to class discussion. Here, too, adept, well-coordinated support from teaching assistants notably helps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. On occasions, lesson planning does not take sufficient account of information from assessing pupils' work to structure activities well enough. In these circumstances, particularly in classes for some of the younger pupils, the main task is too demanding and learning slows as pupils seek extra help to complete the task. When marking pupils' work, teachers always praise pupils' accomplishments and often give useful pointers for improvement, especially in English. However, not all written work is marked in the same thorough way.

Strengths in the curriculum lie in the many activities that broaden pupils' experience. Visitors and visits in partnership with local heritage and faith centres expand cultural and sporting awareness. Themes in history, geography and science link subjects effectively with the promotion of progress in reading, writing, numerical and computer skills. Opportunities to take part in choral and drama work substantially contribute in developing pupils' social skills and cultural awareness. For example, older pupils gave a remarkable theatrical presentation about their work on life and culture in Ancient Greece which was well attended by parents and relatives.

Considerate relationships and carefully implemented safeguarding arrangements ensure the welfare of all pupils. By making good use of track records of pupils' performance, a careful identification of needs, skilful teaching assistance and with a close eye on their development, together, these features make a key contribution in supporting pupils at risk of underachievement. In partnership with the local

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

authority, adroit management of the emotional and behavioural difficulties of some vulnerable pupils develops their ability to work with classmates and leads to them making good progress. Good arrangements successfully prepare pupils for moving from one part of the school to the next and then on to secondary education. Effective procedures to support attendance have reduced persistent absence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders work with a commendable team spirit to drive improvement with dedication and commitment. They provide a clear direction focused on raising attainment and progress through improving teaching quality and the continuous development of a skills-based curriculum. They recognise the value of drawing upon the skills of experienced teachers to help develop expertise in others. Staff wholeheartedly embrace the school's aims for the avoidance of discrimination. Equality of opportunity is outstanding for all groups of pupils including boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and higher attaining pupils. The school is diligent in ensuring all achieve well.

The governing body is effective and well informed. They hold the school to account through full discussion and consideration of the headteacher's and local authority's reports which keep them up to date. They are involved in seeing the school at work and contribute well to self-evaluation and strategic planning. The governing body and the school promote a supportive and caring ethos which, together with up-to-date training and rigorously followed procedures, combines well to assure all aspects of safeguarding pupils' welfare.

Through many avenues the school seeks to foster a partnership with parents and carers. Good attendance is seen at school performances such as nativity plays and dramatic presentations of study topics. Home-school learning booklets and meetings to share an understanding of contemporary teaching methods, for example, in mathematics, have a sharp focus on enlisting parental support to help their children to learn at home and have led to moderate success. By working with the local authority and support services and by fostering good links with community organisations, the school adds value to its own expertise to greatly benefit pupils. These partnerships and links with schools in other countries make a good contribution to community cohesion.

These are the grades for the 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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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

Most children start in the Nursery class with skills and abilities lower than those expected for their age. Aspects of their personal and social development and particularly their communication and language skills are more often very low. Children settle in quickly, behave well, play happily together and enjoy learning. They make good progress to form the basic building blocks necessary to get off to a secure start in Key Stage 1. At the end of Reception in 2010, most were notably above average in mathematical development, although their personal development and communication, language and literacy skills were at broadly average levels for their age. Higher attaining children successfully reach the highest levels. Children of all ages contributed well to a nativity play where the confidence and quality of the speaking by a team of narrators was second to none. Parents were delighted.

Children learn well from a good balance of activities directed or supported by adults and those they initiate themselves. Well-organised indoor and outdoor facilities are used effectively, even during winter weather, when well-wrapped-up children thoroughly enjoyed investigating the snow. Teaching is sharply focused, for example, on developing children's communication and social skills. Children read well. Successful reading work helps them develop a knowledge of letters and sounds, such as in a Reception group where they were actively involved in matching common words found in a story.

In this well-led and managed facility, successful, caring and working relationships prevail throughout. An effective key worker team skilfully ensure a good balance of well-arranged activities which promote children's independence and stimulate their imagination and enjoyment. Assessments are thoroughly well used to record children's progress and, through learning journals, to share their development with parents and carers. Good procedures assure the welfare of children. Forged at the outset when children join the Nursery class, good links with parents and carers aim to foster learning at home.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

An average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Most have a very positive view of the school, for example, by indicating their satisfaction that their children enjoy school, that the school keeps their child safe, that their children are well taught and supported, and, in turn, are happy with their experience. The inspectors uphold these views. A few parents and carers wrote comments to voice personal concerns about bullying or misbehaviour. Inspectors followed up these concerns. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare, that they know how to report any incidents should one occur and feel they are dealt with quickly. Inspectors found that teachers effectively manage the difficult behaviour exhibited by a very small number of pupils and ensure it does not affect the progress of others.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 225 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	41	28	52	3	6	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	22	41	27	50	3	6	2	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	28	33	61	6	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	28	32	59	7	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	31	31	57	4	8	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	33	29	54	6	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	19	36	67	6	11	2	4
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)	15	28	27	50	6	11	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	19	34	63	8	15	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	15	28	52	10	19	8	15
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	22	28	52	5	9	9	17
The school is led and managed effectively	10	19	28	52	8	15	8	15
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	31	26	48	6	11	3	6

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 is for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



6 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Billingham, TS23 1LJ

Thank you for your welcome when my colleagues and I visited to inspect your school. We were impressed by how polite and helpful you were when we came into lessons and we did enjoy talking with those of you whom we met. We were delighted to see how much you like to take part in lessons and that you were well behaved. We were pleased to see how you contribute to school life, for example, as school councillors and in other ways to help others.

I am pleased to report that your school gives you a good education. All the adults in the school look after you very well and keep you safe. You make good progress through the school. Your teachers have helped you to improve your writing and in turn, results in the English test you take in Year 6 were much improved last year. In English and in mathematics, results were above average.

We have asked the school to continue to help more of you make good progress and keep your results above average in future. In a few of the lessons we visited we felt the tasks were too difficult for younger pupils without them getting a lot of extra help. We have asked your teachers to change the work a little so that it suits you all and you can do it well. When we looked at your books we liked the way your teachers let you know how well you are doing. When they mark all of your written work we have asked them always to let you know how you can make improvements.

You have many opportunities at St John the Evangelist Primary School to learn about life and these help you to prepare for the future. We hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke
Lead inspector

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