

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

Ragworth Road, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees TS20 1HR

Inspection dates 9–10 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and ensure improvements are made. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, enjoy their lessons and work hard. They take pride in their work which is neat and well presented.
- Pupils behave well and show care and consideration towards others. They say they feel safe in school and that the school keeps them safe.
- Children in the early years make a good start to their education. Improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching are enabling children to make better progress. They are well prepared to enter Year 1.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning. They support the teachers to help make sure that pupils, especially those with special educational needs, do well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. A warm, family ethos permeates all aspects of the school's work.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a range of interesting and stimulating topics to engage pupils in their learning. Pupils show a good understanding of British values, supported by their work in personal, social, health and citizenship education and religious education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While outcomes for pupils are good, occasionally the most-able pupils do not have work which is sufficiently challenging to enable them to achieve their highest potential, especially in mathematics.
- Teaching does not always ensure that enough pupils exceed expected progress across all year groups and subjects.
- The school improvement plans do not have precise measurable targets by which leaders and governors can check progress towards them.
- The website is not fully compliant with statutory guidance, particularly in relation to information on the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to outstanding to ensure that more pupils exceed expected progress across all year groups and subjects, particularly by providing a higher level of challenge for the most able, including deepening pupils' understanding in mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring the school improvement plans have more precise targets by which progress on the school's priorities can be measured
 - improving the school website so that it meets statutory requirements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher is ambitious for the school and has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their learning. She and other leaders are keen to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential. There is a calm, purposeful atmosphere within the school where staff and pupils feel valued. Parents recognise this and appreciate the support given to their children. This is shown in the positive responses to the questionnaires received during the inspection and in the results of the school's own parental survey.
- Senior leaders relish the opportunity to take on roles as Heads of School in St Joseph's and Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Primary School, while the executive headteacher works between both schools. Subject and other leaders work effectively as a team and there is capacity in the leadership team to ensure continued improvements to the school when the executive headteacher is not present. The special educational needs coordinator has a very clear understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and how they can best be supported. She checks rigorously on these pupils' progress and makes sure additional support is effective. As a result, most of these pupils make at least good and often better progress.
- The school's plans for improvement identify the right priorities, including in the action plans written by subject leaders. However, targets by which success can be measured are not precise enough, particularly in respect of improving further the achievement of pupils in each year group. It is not clear who will check or evaluate the success of the actions.
- Teachers' performance is managed effectively. Staff have appropriate targets which are closely linked to the areas identified in the school's improvement plans. Leaders check on teachers' work on a regular basis and hold meetings to discuss how well pupils are learning. Staff understand that they may not progress up the pay scale unless targets are met.
- There are good opportunities for professional development. Leaders and teachers have undertaken a range of qualifications and training courses and also have opportunities to share good practice both within and beyond the school. Leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and there is a focus on the impact teaching has on pupils' learning. Staff are given good advice on how to improve their practice.
- The school is securing the new curriculum effectively. The curriculum is broad and balanced and enables pupils to make good progress. Pupils learn a range of different topics which interest and motivate them, such as about 'Minibeasts' or the 'Anglo Saxons'. Pupils relish opportunities to go on educational visits, particularly residential visits, and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects in the curriculum, enabling them to reach standards at the end of Year 6 which are above average. The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. Occasionally, the most-able pupils across the school do not always receive a high enough level of challenge to help them make even more progress.
- The curriculum does much to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is a strength in the school. The pupils have written their own mission statement and have an understanding of personal qualities such as joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control through the 'Fruit of the Spirit' expectations. Their work in religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education supports their understanding of British values as they learn about faiths and cultures different from their own, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils learn how to protect the environment, for example through learning about recycling and participating in eco-friendly activities.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils. The school has identified this as a priority as there were gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in some year groups. The funding has been used to employ additional teaching support in Year 6 and the early years. The impact of this can be seen, for example, when disadvantaged pupils made better progress than their peers in Year 6 in 2015, enabling them to catch up.
- The primary physical education and sports funding is used well to promote pupils' health and well-being as well as their sporting skills. Pupils have access to a wide range of sporting activities and competitions. Training is provided for staff to enable them to enhance their skills. External agencies also provide activities, such as dance teaching, which pupils thoroughly enjoy.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school. Of those who responded to the online Ofsted questionnaire, the majority stated that they valued the information they receive on how well their children are doing and say their children are happy and safe. As one parent stated, 'The staff create a very caring family atmosphere in school. I would recommend it to other families'.

- The local authority has provided light-touch support to the school. The school improvement adviser visits on a termly basis to provide challenge and support. Leaders have valued the support provided in the early years to help improve the provision and the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are experienced, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the school. They are committed and dedicated to supporting and challenging the school to improve.
 - Governors have a wide range of expertise which they use to good effect, for example a governor with relevant experience checks on health and safety issues within the school. Governors undertake regular training in order to enhance their skills.
 - The minutes of governing body meetings, including those of the curriculum and school improvement committee, show the good level of challenge given to school leaders. Governors undertake 'learning walks' to see for themselves how well pupils are learning. Leaders provide them with a good range of information on different aspects of the work of the school, including performance information.
 - Governors ensure for the most part that statutory duties are met; nevertheless, some aspects of required information are not fully compliant on the website, for example in relation to the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
 - Governors acknowledge that they need to ensure that leaders include specific and measurable targets within the school improvement plans, particularly in relation to pupils' attainment and progress, so that governors can monitor these more closely. Governors are aware of the impact of the use of funding, such as the pupil premium and primary physical education and sports funding, on pupils' progress and well-being.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school is rigorous in checking and recording the suitability of all adults working with pupils. Staff, including designated officers and governors, have received up-to-date training at the appropriate level. Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They ensure that they use and explain appropriate subject-specific vocabulary which enables pupils to know and understand it. Marking and feedback are used effectively, in line with the school's policy, to help pupils improve their work.
- Teachers share good practice and take opportunities to learn from one another. They assess work carefully and identify appropriate 'next steps' for pupils in their learning. However, teachers do not always challenge the most-able pupils sufficiently to enable them to always make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and reading is a strength. Pupils use their phonics skills well to help them tackle unfamiliar words and are learning their key words well in the younger classes. Pupils further up the school read with fluency and are able to talk knowledgeably about the texts they are reading.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects across the curriculum. Teachers have high expectations of the quality of work expected and, for example, work in pupils' topic books and religious education books is of as good a standard as in their English books. Pupils are given opportunities to correct their spellings and any grammar or punctuation errors. Their work is neat and well presented.
- In mathematics, pupils make good progress in developing their calculation skills. There are some opportunities for them to engage in practical activities, such as weighing items to see which is the heaviest and which is the lightest. However, the most-able pupils are not always given enough opportunities to apply their understanding more deeply.
- Teaching assistants are very capable and contribute greatly to pupils' learning. They have a good understanding of how best to meet pupils' needs, particularly those who have special educational needs or disability or who are disadvantaged, and support them well. This enables these pupils, in particular, to make at least good and often better progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and have positive attitudes to learning. They take care to ensure that their classrooms are tidy and well ordered, taking on responsibility themselves. They wear their uniform with pride and are keen to explain to visitors how friendly everyone is.
- Pupils are courteous and polite and look after one another well. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities to help look after younger ones. They take their responsibilities as school councillors very seriously.
- Pupils inspectors spoke to during the inspection were sure there is no bullying. They said that occasionally pupils fall out with one another, but that any disputes are promptly resolved. They said that they would be happy to approach any member of staff if they had a concern.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and indicate that they are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example when cycling, crossing the road or using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Classrooms are calm and orderly, enabling pupils to focus on their work without interruption. Pupils mainly behave well in classrooms and around the school. Occasionally, however, when teaching is less engaging, pupils lose interest and do not contribute as well as they could.
- In lessons, pupils listen to each other and appreciate the views and opinions expressed by their classmates. They are confident to 'have a go' and understand that they learn by making mistakes and correcting them.
- Attendance is broadly average. Pupils are keen to come to school and value the rewards given for good attendance, such as a trophy. Leaders and staff take action promptly to follow up any absences to make sure pupils are safe. Pupils enjoy attending the 'Early Birds' club and this is helping to ensure pupils arrive in school on time.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- From their different starting points, pupils make good progress to achieve standards that are above average by the time they leave Year 6. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school.
- There are strengths in the teaching of reading and phonics. Consequently, at the end of Year 1, results in the phonics screening check have been well above average over time. Pupils read with fluency and expression, for example when reading poems aloud in class.
- Pupils take pride in their writing. Handwriting and presentation are of a good standard. Leaders identified that attainment and progress in writing was not as strong as in other subjects. Fewer pupils made more than expected progress in writing than in reading and mathematics in 2015. As a result, leaders have taken positive action to address this, and work in pupils' books shows improvement. Good attention is paid to developing pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and, by the end of Year 6, standards have been above average over time. Pupils are expected to explain their reasoning for their answers and enjoy practical activities when they have the opportunity to engage in them. Occasionally, in some teaching, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply the skills they have learned or deepen their understanding.
- The school's own performance information and pupils' work show that pupils make good progress overall. However, progress slows a little across lower Key Stage 2 where fewer pupils are on track to meet expectations for their age. Rates of progress increase across upper Key Stage 2 and attainment has been above average over time.
- There were gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their classmates in some year groups last year, including at the end of Key Stage 1. However, by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015, disadvantaged pupils made more progress than their peers, enabling them to catch up. Leaders have rightly identified that this is a priority for improvement and are taking successful steps to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils make the progress they should.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make at least good and often better progress. This is because their needs are sharply identified and effective, targeted support is provided to help them to achieve as well as they can.

Early years provision

is good

- Children in the early years get off to a good start. Children enter Nursery with skills and abilities which are broadly typical of children of their age. They settle quickly into class routines and are keen and eager to learn and explore the environment around them. There are good relationships with parents and carers from the start and they are consulted about what their children know and can do. Parents contribute information from home such as 'wow' moments so that staff can follow up on children's interests.
- Children in the Reception Year make good progress and are well prepared to enter Year 1 as standards are improving. They are able to use their phonics skills well to help them to read unfamiliar words and show an understanding of the books they are reading. They are taught a correct pencil grip and are learning to form letters and numbers correctly. There are too few disadvantaged children to make statistical comparisons of their achievement with others.
- There are good opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening skills, particularly when some adults ask them probing questions to help them think harder or solve problems for themselves. This was evident when children were using bricks for construction but there were not quite enough. When asked by a teaching assistant how to solve the problem, they came up with their own solution to put all the bricks back and then share them out equally.
- Children are also developing their numeracy skills well. They were able to identify which objects were heavier or lighter and, in the Reception class, were able to count in tens up to a hundred with the support of adults.
- Leaders regularly and carefully carry out assessments and take successful steps to ensure that children are making the progress they should. Adults quickly identify any children who may have special educational needs or disability and action is taken promptly to ensure their needs are met, including through working with other agencies. Leaders have identified that boys did not achieve as well as girls last year so are taking steps to address this. However, not all children are challenged as much as they could be.
- Children behave well and look after one another. They cooperate well and play happily together. This was evident in the Nursery, in the role play area which was a church. One child was in role as the priest and five other children enthusiastically joined in singing a hymn with great joy.
- The leadership of the early years is effective. The curriculum is improving and this is ensuring that rates of progress are increasing. There are effective procedures in place to keep children safe and children have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Children are learning well how to look after themselves, such as washing their hands before having their snack and cleaning their teeth afterwards. Welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	111684
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10011018

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Walker
Executive headteacher	Mary Tate
Telephone number	01642 360401
Website	www.sjnorton.org.uk
Email address	stjosephsrcschool.norton@stockton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 May 2011

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is below the national average. Pupil premium funding is provided to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability receiving support, including those with a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plans, is below average.
- Children in the Nursery attend part time and those in the Reception Year attend full time.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher is currently also executive headteacher at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Primary School. The two assistant headteachers have been appointed as Heads of School with one in each school.
- There is an 'Early Bird' breakfast club run each morning, managed by the governing body.
- A section 48 inspection of religious education was due to take place during the same week as the section 5 inspection, but was postponed.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all classes and made some short visits to classrooms to evaluate the quality of the curriculum and the provision for different groups of pupils. The executive headteacher jointly observed the quality of teaching with the lead inspector.
- Inspectors talked to pupils informally in lessons and around the school and met three groups of pupils.
- The inspectors listened to a number of pupils read in each year group and reviewed the work in pupils' books.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the executive headteacher, the head of school, subject and other leaders. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of information, including minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, information on pupils' progress, monitoring records on the quality of teaching, local authority reports, information on the school website and documentation relating to safeguarding (protecting children and making sure they are safe).
- Inspectors considered the 34 responses made by parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and considered the views expressed by parents in the school's own survey.
- There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaires in this inspection.

Inspection team

Christine Inkster, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Geoff Seagrove	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Vernon	Ofsted Inspector
Dame Nicola Nelson-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector

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