

St Joseph's RC Primary School Manchester

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105550
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	377263
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2012
Lead inspector	John Dunne

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	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Ian Farrell
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Porter
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Dunne
David Halford

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed eight teachers teaching 12 lessons. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a few 'support lessons' where specialist help is provided by trained assistants. They held meetings with two groups of pupils, three members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. The inspectors observed the school's work, listened to pupils read and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, data provided by the school about pupils' progress, the safeguarding and equality policies, and minutes of the governing body. Also, they analysed 158 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff. Inspectors took account of responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. A majority of the pupils are drawn from minority ethnic backgrounds and many speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. There is a much greater level of movement into and out of the school than is seen in most schools. The school has numerous awards including Activemark, Healthy Schools status – Bronze and National and 'Let's get cooking' award. The school meets the current government floor standard.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school with strong support from parents and carers. The school is well led and managed and this has resulted in a number of key improvements since its last inspection.
- The attainment of pupils is broadly average. Innovative and outstanding arrangements for improving reading, writing and communication skills are having a significantly positive impact on raising attainment in reading and writing. Well trained and skilful teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the success of this daily programme.
- Teaching overall is good and, as a result, most pupils make good progress and achieve well, whatever their starting points. Teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge for most-able pupils. Although some lesson planning is excellent, not all teachers include sufficient detail in their plans; they focus too much on what they will be doing and not enough on how activities will maximise pupils' learning. Teachers give pupils good written and verbal feedback so that pupils have a clear picture of how to improve.
- The school's curriculum is good and some aspects are outstanding, particularly in literacy and numeracy. In some other subjects it is less stimulating. Leaders and managers recognise that the way teachers deliver some aspects of the curriculum does not allow pupils enough opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. As a result, pupils' enjoyment and progress in these lessons are weaker.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and the overwhelming majority of pupils report that they feel safe. A strength of the school is the way pupils from a wide range of cultures, social backgrounds and disabilities support each other, creating a harmonious and happy community.
- Good provision for those pupils who have barriers to learning or special educational needs, or who are disabled, enables them to achieve well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment from average to at least above average by:
 - ensuring all teachers provide consistent challenge in lessons for more-able pupils
 - making sure that all teachers' planning is more sharply focused on pupils' learning and less on what they are doing, and how activities will enable all to be engaged and challenged
 - ensure all teachers' planning builds upon an understanding of prior learning and identifies opportunities to extend pupils' learning when they are ready.
- Build upon the successful improvements already made in the curriculum by:
 - ensuring all subjects offer sufficient opportunities for pupils to spend more time actively learning by working independently and collaboratively and less time listening to teachers' explanations
 - seeking out examples of outstanding curriculum models and using these to improve the school's own practice.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school with skills and knowledge that are generally below those expected. Throughout their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage they achieve well due to consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching and effective teaching assistants. Children's good behaviour, self-confidence and willingness to work really well together contribute significantly to their good progress and this was clear from lessons seen. For example, children were excited as they pretended to be Arctic explorers, and adults used skilful questions to develop speaking and listening skills well.

Pupils' work, data provided by the school and lessons observed provide secure evidence that progress in Key Stage 1 is good. Attainment in reading, by the end of Year 2, is broadly average and is improving strongly due to the outstanding letters and sounds and reading comprehension programme observed by inspectors. In these lessons, learning moved with pace, because teachers used a wide range of stimulating visual resources and even very young children demonstrated considerable powers of concentration.

Pupils' overall attainment, including standards of reading, by the end of Year 6, is average. The school has been particularly successful in improving the attainment of the large number of pupils entitled to free school meals, and in 2011 the attainment gap for these pupils was significantly lower than seen nationally. This is largely a result of the school's rigorous monitoring of the progress of every individual and the successful strategies used to remedy any identified underachievement. Pupils from

different minority ethnic groups and those speaking English as an additional language make good progress in line with their peers. Pupils with special educational needs and disabled pupils make similar progress to other pupils because of the school's effective intervention programmes. In line with other pupils their achievement is good. Pupils joining the school mid-key stage are tracked and monitored closely and, as a result, make good progress. In some lessons the most-able pupils do not make as much progress as they should because teachers do not plan work for them which is sufficiently challenging.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers believe that their children are making good progress, which matches the inspection evidence.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall and is reflected in the good progress pupils are making. Outstanding teaching was seen during the school's daily 'read/write' phonics and literacy programme. This is because the curriculum for the development of reading skills is well planned to ensure that it exactly matches pupils' needs. This is achieved by regrouping the seven classes into 15 mixed-age groups according to their needs. In these lessons learning had real pace and challenge. Very young children were seen making rapid gains in their understanding of letters and sounds and writing skills. Older pupils were made to think really hard and were developing excellent comprehension skills due to probing questioning from teachers and well-trained teaching assistants. In good lessons, activities engaged and enthused pupils and tasks were often chosen to develop pupils' understanding of cultural and social differences, right from wrong and how this impacts on people's feelings and lives. Lessons such as these make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teaching and lesson planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage are consistently good. In the small number of weaker lessons seen in Years 1 to 6, planning lacked detail and focused too much on what pupils would do rather than how tasks could accelerate their learning. In these lessons challenge for the most-able pupils was also lacking or the pace of learning slowed because pupils spent too long listening to teachers and were not given sufficient opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. Pupils' work is marked frequently and pupils act upon the clear information teachers give them about the next steps to improve their work.

Within the curriculum, the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to develop understanding of other cultures. For example, in an English lesson pupils had to speculate about the feelings of children travelling through culturally diverse parts of South Africa.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers expressed the view that their children are being taught well and this matched inspectors' judgements.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is typically good, pupils agree that it is and school records show this. Their understanding of how to stay safe is good because the curriculum gives them good insights into the risks to which they may be exposed, both within and beyond school. This and their good relationships with staff make them feel safe. The way pupils from many social and cultural backgrounds interact harmoniously is a strength of the school and provides a secure climate for learning. There is no evidence of bullying, and parents, carers and pupils express confidence in the schools' systems for dealing with such occurrences should they arise. When the pace of learning in lessons slows or does not challenge pupils of all abilities, pupils maintain their good behaviour but become passive or compliant and their enthusiasm and engagement drops. On the rare occasions when pupils behave inappropriately, the school's consistent behaviour management systems quickly resolve the issues.

Pupils talk knowledgeably about their responsibility to raise money for national and overseas charities for those less fortunate than themselves. They are engaged with their local community through a range of events held at the church and in school. They have a good understanding of right from wrong and show a high level of respect to their peers, supply staff and visitors.

Attendance which had been stubbornly below average has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is currently well above the national average. The family support worker and the attendance team provide considerable and effective support for many pupils and their families and this has a positive effect in removing barriers to learning and improving attendance and punctuality.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, governing body and leaders and managers at all levels have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Close teamwork between the headteacher and deputy headteacher contributes well to the school's effectiveness. The school now has an accurate view of the quality of teaching. A clear example of this was shown by the commonality of the views between inspectors and leaders and managers as to what should be the areas for improvement.

Leaders and managers are clear that improvements that they have made in provision for, and progress in, reading, writing and comprehension are a major factor in securing higher attainment. This is as a result of the highly effective 'read/write' programme already described. As part of this, leaders and managers have shown vision in investing in high quality training for teaching assistants in how to teach phonics and this is one of reasons why the programme is so successful. The school has developed good systems for monitoring the progress of every individual and group and has effective strategies for tackling any identified underachievement to bring pupils back on track. These improvements have raised attainment and have accelerated progress since the last inspection, demonstrating good capacity to improve further.

The governing body has a very clear understanding of what the school needs to do to drive up standards. It has been influential in a number of improvements. For example, it has challenged and supported senior leaders to improve attendance, so that the school now robustly challenges parents and carers who wish to take their children on holiday during term time. This, together with introducing a breakfast club where pupils can participate in fun activities has raised attendance significantly. The effectiveness of the school's systems for promoting equality and tackling discrimination is evident in the harmonious relationships which exist in this socially and culturally diverse school, as well as in the good progress made by all groups of pupils. The governing body and staff ensure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and ensure that the school is a safe place for everyone.

The impact of the curriculum is good as shown in pupils' outcomes. However, it is stronger in English and mathematics than in some other subjects. Leaders and managers understand this and have already begun to implement improvements. Themed weeks have been introduced, for example international week, where pupils explore cultures, food, customs and dress throughout the world. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed these weeks and described how coming to school in clothes representing their home culture enabled them to celebrate the school's cultural diversity. They also said how much they enjoyed the Friday afternoon 'Golden Time' where they can choose from a range of fun-based learning activities, but they also explained how this was a privilege that had to be earned by good behaviour.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



20 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School Manchester, Manchester, M13 0BT

Many thanks to all of you for the welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking with so many of you. You are right to be proud of your school. It is a good school that takes good care of you and helps you to achieve well. It was pleasing to hear that you feel safe in school and are confident that the staff will give you help when you need it. Many of you talked about how lessons are fun and interesting and it was good to see how well you worked in many of your lessons, concentrating hard and enjoying all of the different activities school puts on for you at lunchtime. We were very interested to hear you talk about how much you enjoyed the theme weeks and golden time. It is clear that the leaders and managers, together with the governing body and all staff, have worked hard to make the school an enjoyable place for you to learn. We were particularly impressed by the way everyone gets on so well together.

In order to help you to attain even better standards, we have asked the school to improve in a few areas. We have asked that:

- in all lessons, teachers provide work which challenges the most-able pupils more
- all teachers plan lesson activities which are going to get everyone involved, enthusiastic and challenged
- all teachers give you more opportunities to work independently and in groups
- all teachers look at how some of the most successful schools organise learning and whether some of these ideas could be used to improve lessons at St Joseph's.

I am confident that you will support your teachers in making these improvements and I wish you the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

John Dunne
Lead inspector

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