

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brindle

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119669
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379865
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Long
Headteacher	Frances Fordyce
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Melvyn Hemmings

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons taught by four teachers. Discussions were held with the members of the governing body, a local authority representative, staff and groups of pupils. He observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. Questionnaires from staff, pupils and from 48 parents and carers were scrutinised. The inspection took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Information about the school

St Joseph's is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in a Reception class and three mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is that of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The school has gained a variety of awards, including the Activemark and Healthy School status. There was a period of significant disruption to staffing following the previous inspection. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress. There is an onsite nursery, and before- and after-school clubs that are privately managed. These will be subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- St Joseph's is a satisfactory school. It is improving and is a friendly and safe place in which to learn. Its main strengths are the focused leadership of the headteacher, achievement in reading, pupils' behaviour and their safety, and the sustained improvement made over the last year. Weaknesses that prevent it being a good school are inconsistencies in the teaching of writing in Key Stage 2 and middle leaders not being fully involved in promoting school improvement. Also, the curriculum does not provide sufficient emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills across subjects.
- Pupils achieve satisfactorily and attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Writing is a weaker aspect of pupils' performance in English. They lack skills in creating increasingly complex sentences that are correctly structured. Achievement in reading is good.
- Teaching has a variety of strengths and is particularly strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, teachers do not consistently set appropriately challenging work for different groups of pupils in writing, especially the more able. The teaching of reading is good throughout the school.
- Parents and carers, staff and pupils say there has been significant improvement in behaviour over the last year. Pupils behave well and there is minimal disruption to learning. They say they feel safe in school and their attendance is high. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The headteacher's leadership has been central to the school's improvement. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance have led to improvement, particularly in promoting pupils' reading skills. Middle leaders are relatively new and inexperienced in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and so they are not yet having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise achievement in writing in Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring teachers consistently set challenging work for different groups, especially the more able
 - providing precise guidance to pupils on how to improve their skills in writing increasingly complex sentences that are correctly structured
 - placing sufficient emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.

- Strengthen leadership and management by improving the skills of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their skill level on entering school, which is generally as expected for their age. Progress is satisfactory overall, being good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The disruption to staffing impacted adversely on achievement and progress in Key Stage 2, and so pupils' progress, has been no better than satisfactory. Staffing has been stabilised and, over the last year, significant improvement has been made in this key stage. Attainment overall is broadly average. Achievement and progress in reading is now good because of the strong emphasis placed on developing pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds. Progress in mathematics is accelerating because the proportion of good teaching is increasing. As a result attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 is close to being above the national average. Pupils have secure calculation skills and can apply these confidently when solving problems. Improvement in writing has not been as strong and attainment is broadly average. Pupils lack skills in correctly structuring complex sentences. Attainment in reading is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave school. Pupils enjoy reading and talk with enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, showing interest and enjoyment in their activities. They concentrate for lengthy periods, listen attentively and follow instructions promptly. They take responsibility for their own learning when working independently, which shows improvement since the last inspection. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children confidently make choices for themselves and cooperate happily in pairs and small groups. This is particularly evident in the well-equipped outdoor area which children can access throughout the day.

Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are given extra support to make sure they are fully involved in all activities and make the same progress as other pupils. There is no significant difference between the achievement and the quality of learning of different groups. This includes pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not. In their questionnaires, almost all parents and carers agreed that their children were making good progress at the school. Inspection evidence shows that there are significant elements of good progress, but it is satisfactory overall because of achievement in writing.

Quality of teaching

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff work well together as a team to provide interesting activities that maintain children's interest. Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves and this contributes to their development as independent learners. The outdoor area is used effectively to build upon learning that has taken place indoors, such as when children were learning to recognise and match numerals one to nine.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers generally plan carefully to meet the needs of the different age ranges in their classes. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and this has contributed not only to pupils' social and moral development, but also to significant improvement in their general behaviour. As a result classrooms are calm and friendly places in which to learn and lessons proceed smoothly. Teachers make good use of a variety of resources to provide practical activities that capture and maintain pupils' interest. This was evident in a science lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2 in which they were investigating how to make a simple electrical circuit to light a bulb. Marking and discussion are generally used well to show pupils how to improve. However, in Key Stage 2, the guidance for pupils to improve their skills in writing correctly structured complex sentences lacks precision. Teaching in this key stage does not always sufficiently challenge pupils in writing, particularly the more able. Teaching assistants are deployed appropriately to support all pupils, especially those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.

Teaching contributes positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers manage classrooms well and ensure pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. The opportunities for pupils to be involved in paired and small-group activities effectively promote their social development. The curriculum is planned appropriately to develop pupils' numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. Planning is not as effective in promoting pupils' writing skills across the curriculum. In their questionnaires, almost all parents and carers agreed that their children are taught well at school. Inspection evidence shows that the proportion of good teaching is increasing but it is satisfactory overall.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Staff, parents, carers and pupils overwhelmingly say that behaviour is good, having improved greatly over the last year. Pupils are kind and thoughtful to each other, acting responsibly, in and out of classrooms. They have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying, including racist, verbal and physical. They say there used to be bullying by a few pupils but staff put a stop to it and there has not been any for a long time. Observations in lessons and around school confirm that behaviour is good. It makes a positive contribution to the progress that pupils make.

All parents and carers agreed in their questionnaires that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils say they feel safe and secure at all times in school. They know what might be an unsafe situation and how it may threaten their own and others' safety. Pupils are clear that any issues they raise will be taken seriously by the school and prompt action will be taken. The curriculum contributes to pupils' understanding of how to stay safe, as with lessons on how to use the internet safely.

Pupils have positive attitudes and are keen to learn. They enjoy coming to school as shown in their high attendance. As one pupil commented, 'Our teachers always try to make lessons fun so we enjoy learning.' Pupils add to the life of the school by taking on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council. They talked enthusiastically about how the council had played an important part in planning the school's adventure playground. Parents and carers are pleased with the way the school takes care of their children. One comment is typical, 'I find the staff very approachable and helpful and my child is very happy in school.'

Leadership and management

The headteacher has overseen a variety of initiatives that have accelerated improvement over the last year. These include revising behaviour management procedures and developing a more creative curriculum. As a result behaviour has improved and pupils are developing their independent learning skills more effectively. Good quality professional development has been provided to enhance staff skills, particularly in the teaching of reading. All staff and governors share the headteacher's ambitious vision for future development and morale is high. Middle leaders are relatively new and inexperienced in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. This limits their involvement in promoting school improvement. The governing body is supportive of the school and willing to hold it to account for its performance. Self-evaluation is accurate and gives a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The capacity to improve is satisfactory and improving, as is demonstrated by the sustained success over the last year.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and are systematically reviewed. All staff are suitably trained and have the skills and expertise required. The promotion of equal opportunity is satisfactory, with the school regularly checking the performance of different groups. No form of discrimination is tolerated.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched by a variety of extra-curricular activities and opportunity to take part in educational visits, such as to the Museum of Science and industry in Manchester. Opportunities to work with a variety of visitors effectively extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. The introduction of thematic afternoons, in which pupils are encouraged to explore ideas for themselves, has improved their motivation, especially that of boys. Planning lacks sufficient emphasis on improving pupils' writing skills across the curriculum. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is shown in pupils' improved behaviour and their better understanding of the beliefs and traditions of cultures different to their own. Leaders ensure that parents and carers are kept regularly informed about how well their children are doing at school.

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.



9 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brindle, Preston PR5 0DQ

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do. Inspection judgements show that yours is a satisfactory school and that:

- you attain average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6
- your achievement in reading is good because of improvements made over the last year in how you are taught
- the curriculum provides interesting activities, including a visit to the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester
- you feel safe in school and learn a lot in lessons, as indicated in your questionnaires
- your behaviour is good and you are polite and kind to others
- you enjoy school as is shown by your high attendance.

I have now asked your school to:

- improve your ability to write accurately structured complex sentences
- make sure teachers in Key Stage 2 always give you activities in writing that make you think hard, especially to those pupils who find work easy
- provide you with precise guidance on how to improve your writing
- develop the skills of teachers who lead subjects in checking the quality of teaching and learning.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings
Lead inspector

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