

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105092
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	355697
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	464
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Annette Roberts, JP
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Dainty
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2008
School address	Woodchurch Road Prenton Merseyside CH43 5UT
Telephone number	0151 6526781
Fax number	0151 6701843
Email address	schooloffice@stjosephs-birkenhead.wirral.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2010
Inspection number	355697

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Twenty three lessons were observed and 16 teachers seen. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at national assessment data and the school's assessments, samples of pupils' work, teachers' planning, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors scrutinised 174 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as a sample of questionnaires completed by pupils.

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

- Whether there is sufficient challenge and support for less able and vulnerable pupils.
- How effectively do teachers assess pupils' progress and use assessment to promote good learning.
- What is the contribution made, by all leaders and managers, to school improvement since the last inspection.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school in which the very large majority of pupils are White British. An average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. An increasing number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Healthy Schools status and the Activemark are among the school's awards and it is recognised as a Family Works School. Before- and after- school care is provided on site.

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

This is a good school. Effective leadership, including very significant support from the governing body has enabled the school to consolidate the strengths evident at the time of the last inspection and to improve aspects of provision and pupils' personal development. Therefore the school's capacity to improve further is good.

Pupils' enthusiasm for school is evident in their consistently outstanding behaviour and attitudes. They participate keenly in all school activities and have an excellent understanding of what it takes to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Pupils feel safe in school because of the strength of their relationships with one another and the outstanding care, guidance and support provided by all staff.

Although there is a broad range of abilities, children's development overall is below expectations for their age when they enter the nursery. Progress is good as pupils move through the school, so that they achieve well and attain average standards by the end of Year 6. While the most recent unvalidated test results show overall improvement, the school has recognised that pupils' writing is a weaker aspect and has introduced new strategies to encourage better quality and standards. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the well targeted help they receive. Those pupils who speak English an additional language also progress well. Many join classes at different times throughout the year. Nevertheless, they settle in well and some make rapid progress because of the excellent support from staff with expertise in their particular language.

Consistently good teaching ensures a good pace to pupils' learning. Pupils say 'lessons are fun because there are lots of activities'. Indeed, progress is gathering pace because teaching and learning have improved through better use of assessment to guide lesson planning and now give pupils a better understanding of their progress. Good curricular enrichment contributes to pupils' high levels of enjoyment and good achievement. However, opportunities for pupils to work independently and apply their literacy, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills creatively across all subjects are limited.

Leaders and managers monitor the school's work rigorously and self-evaluation is accurate. All staff members know how they are accountable in the drive for improvement. Astute appointments and successful professional development for staff have strengthened the teaching team. The school maintains consistently high levels of care and has excellent support from parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing throughout the school, by:

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

- embedding the recently introduced strategy to improve writing
- ensuring that the more able pupils are always sufficiently challenged.
- Plan more opportunities for pupils to apply and develop literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology skills in different ways across the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are attentive in lessons and are keen to do well. They usually recall what they have learned previously and answer questions confidently because they know that their contribution to lessons is valued. Pupils work hard and enjoy practical activities especially when working in groups, for example, to think of questions to ask each other or to investigate and solve problems. Pupils know how well they are doing and say that teachers' marking is helpful.

Children's abilities are, overall, below expected levels for their age when they begin the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception Year they are prepared well for Key Stage 1 and make good progress in Years 1 and 2 so that at the end of Year 2, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are average. Attainment at the end of Year 6 was average in 2010. This represents good progress for that group of pupils from their earlier, below average, starting points. The school's improved test results in mathematics were particularly rewarding because the focus throughout the year had been on more effective use of assessment. Inspection evidence indicates that good progress is continuing throughout the school. Well planned support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities boosts their skills and helps them to participate confidently in group work. Bilingual support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is very effective and results in some pupils making excellent progress.

Pupils have a very strong sense of what is right and wrong. They are always mindful of others and are prepared to listen to others' point of view. They oppose any form of bullying and racist behaviour and have a good awareness of the cultures and lifestyles of communities around the world. Pupils show their regard for children's rights in the way they channel their efforts into supporting children and schools in Nigeria, Kenya and Malawi. They contribute well to school life by taking on responsibilities, such as acting as playground buddies or librarians. The school council is very active and develops its role by engaging with council members from other schools to compare activities. Pupils' attendance is above average and an important contribution to their good preparation for the workplace and future economic well-being.

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

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	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other 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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers consistently plan thoroughly and build effectively on pupils' prior learning. Activities in lessons are matched broadly to pupils' varying abilities. At times, more able pupils could progress to more difficult work at an earlier point in the lesson so that they are challenged more fully. Teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards to focus pupils' attention and use other resources imaginatively to keep lessons lively and enjoyable. For example, children wrote accurate lists of instructions to make a pizza, after making one themselves, and recognised the importance of having the different steps in the correct order. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Relationships in class are very supportive and a strong factor in pupils' good learning. Occasionally, pupils need greater clarification of the vocabulary linked to the topic they are learning in order to help discussion and, ultimately, their writing in that subject. Teaching assistants are well informed and their skilful work with pupils contributes significantly to pupils' good progress. Marking is good. Effective questioning during lessons assesses pupils' understanding of the topic and increasingly pupils are involved in checking their own progress and in setting their own next steps for learning.

The curriculum is enriched well by activities outside lesson time as well as visits and visitors to school. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy a residential experience to Wales. Sports activities are well attended. The focus on literacy, numeracy and ICT skills enables pupils to achieve

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

well in those subjects, but there are few opportunities for pupils to apply their skills purposefully in different ways to help learning in other subjects.

Parents and carers are unanimous in their view that the school cares for their children and keeps them safe. The school works with families and external agencies in a variety of ways to help children access their learning and make the best of their opportunities. Some parents and carers comment on the way staff are prepared to 'go the extra mile' in order to provide the best possible care and support. Pupils are confident that the help they need is always available. Before- and after-school care has a positive impact on pupils' punctuality, as well as ensuring their safety and welfare at the beginning and end of the school day. The quality of guidance all pupils receive is reflected in their outstanding behaviour.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior and middle leaders review the school's performance rigorously and set consistently high standards for improvement. They have an accurate view of the school's work. Regular checks on pupils' progress ensure that challenging academic targets are set. All staff members share the responsibility of ensuring they are achieved. Teaching and learning is managed well. Professional development has built on former strengths and the resulting vision for the school has secured the commitment and drive to move the school forward.

The governing body provides exceptional support and challenge and are fully involved in setting the school's clear direction. All statutory responsibilities are fulfilled efficiently. Governors' very high levels of insight and expertise underpin vigorous systems for monitoring and self-evaluation. All forms of discrimination are strongly challenged. Robust checks on the progress of vulnerable pupils and different groups are carried out because the school is ambitious for every pupil and strives to ensure that all achieve their personal best. The school already has plans to improve progress of the more-able in writing. The school works well with partners and other providers. A notable example is the use of shared funding with a neighbouring school to enhance teachers' skills with a view to increasing the schools' capacity to provide for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Parents and carers are strongly involved in the school. They are extremely well informed about day-to-day work of the school through a wide range of media. Views are sought about matters relating to changes to the curriculum, for example, and through projects, such as Family Works, parents and carers can engage fully in their children's learning. Safeguarding procedures are good. The governing body effectively manages the

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

recruitment and training of suitable staff, as well as the safety of the school site and ensures that all are informed about their responsibilities. Community cohesion is promoted effectively. Positive links are established with local and wider communities, which have growing impact on pupils' understanding of diversity and their responsibilities as community members.

These are the grades for 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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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

Good provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures their good progress from starting points generally below age-related expectations. Children quickly gain confidence and settle well to activities provided. The strong emphasis on developing personal social and emotional skills means that children behave well and are responsive to adults. They share books and other resources well and become interested and curious learners. Activities to promote early communication, language and literacy and mathematical skills are planned well. Children enjoy learning letters and sounds and as a result, approach reading and writing tasks more confidently. There is generally a good balance between indoor and outdoor activities but sometimes the opportunity for independent exploration and play outdoors is limited by teachers' over-direction. Provision for children's welfare is good. Staff are very watchful over children's safety and provide a secure and stimulating environment. Systems for assessing progress are good. They provide accurate information and a solid basis for planning the next steps in children's learning and development. Good leadership has established strong teamwork across Nursery and Reception classes. Parents and carers are entirely supportive and share excellent relationships with the staff.

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

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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers returned a questionnaire. They expressed overwhelming support for the school. Parents typically comment on the warmth of the reception given to them by the headteacher and all other staff. There is particular recognition of the provision for Year 6 prior to leaving the school. A very few parents and carers raised individual concerns about communications with the school and children's well-being. These were discussed with school leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead 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 174 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 464 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	122	70	50	29	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	132	76	41	24	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	84	48	76	44	11	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	45	76	44	12	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	98	56	68	39	6	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	80	46	78	45	12	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	82	47	79	45	10	6	1	1
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)	79	45	77	44	6	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	49	74	43	10	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	73	42	89	51	7	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	39	92	53	5	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	102	59	65	37	4	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	109	63	56	32	3	2	1	1

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are 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.



30 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead, Prenton, CH43 5UT

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and were very interested in what you said about the many activities you enjoy. We all agreed that you are exceptionally polite and well mannered. We found your behaviour around the school to be outstanding. We were very impressed by your above average attendance. It is very important that you keep on attending school as well as you do.

St Josephs is a good school. Your attainment is average and is improving. You make good progress and achieve well. We agree with you that your lessons are fun. Your teachers work hard to make them so. The adults in school take excellent care of you. You also take good care of each other and enjoy school.

The governing body and your parents and carers provide outstanding support for your school. They, with your teachers and you also, I am sure, would like it to be even better. I have asked your teachers to do two things to help that improvement to happen.

The first is to raise your attainment in writing, by making sure that all of you, but especially those who find learning easier than most, are always challenged to the best of your ability, and also for teachers to make best use of the new plans they have for your writing.

Second I have asked teachers to plan more ways for you to practise your writing, mathematics and ICT skills in different ways and in different subjects.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Kevin Johnson
Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.