

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Stacksteads, Bacup

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119661
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358600
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	David Byrne

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	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Oliver Finnegan
Headteacher	Mrs Janette Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. One inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons, taught by four teachers, and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils and two representatives of the local authority. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including records of pupils' progress and the school's improvement plan and policies for securing safeguarding and child protection. The team analysed the questionnaires returned by 29 parents and carers and also evaluated those supplied by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether teaching is sufficiently challenging to ensure that pupils make good progress and achieve as well as they should.
- How consistent are assessment systems across the school and how effectively they are used to guide pupils about how to improve.
- How effective leaders and managers are in monitoring the school performance so that areas for improvement are identified and acted upon.
- How good is the contribution of the school to community cohesion, including developing an understanding of the diversity of modern society and global dimensions.

Information about the school

This is a small primary school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds. Since 2008 there has been a relatively high staff turnover. This academic year, one new teacher took up post in September and in January 2011 a new Early Years Foundation Stage leader was appointed. The school has gained Healthy School status and Financial Management Status in Schools (FMSIS).

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that is improving. Good guidance and support contribute to a caring and supportive ethos and a warm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils behave well and form good relationships with others and willingly take on responsibility throughout the school. Children have a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where leadership and management are outstanding.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. When children join the Early Years Foundation Stage, most have skills that are typical for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average. Over recent years, pupils' progress has been satisfactory, but as a result of the establishment of a settled teaching team, progress is now accelerating. Teachers and teaching assistants work enthusiastically to raise expectations for themselves and for pupils. Relationships are positive and pupils respect their teachers and want to please them by trying their best. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance.

There are inconsistencies in the expectations made of pupils and some aspects of teachers' assessment are not secure. Pupils have a general understanding of how to improve their work, but the targets set for them are not always specific enough to meet their needs. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are enabled to solve problems for themselves and given the opportunity to be independent in their learning. Where teaching is less effective, pupils are expected to listen for too long and follow instructions rather than think for themselves.

The curriculum meets requirements and promotes pupils' good personal development. Some innovative initiatives bring learning to life, for example, the cross-curricular themed events, such as the Green Week. Generally, however, the curriculum is not imaginative enough to raise attainment by enabling pupils to improve their skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) by applying them to a wide variety of contexts.

The headteacher and governing body have maintained a clear ambition for the school despite a period of instability in staffing. A negative consequence of this instability has been that some essential management systems have not been embedded. For example, it has been difficult to establish coherent subject leadership and to set up a systematic approach to monitoring across the school. Some key policies have not been monitored regularly to make sure they meet the school's needs. The more settled staffing situation and evidently strong teamwork within it are generating a renewed drive for improvement. This emerging strength and the generally accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, give the school a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Up to 40% of the 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to at least good by:
 - strengthening the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' performance
 - improving the quality of guidance offered to pupils about how to improve
 - increasing the level of challenge for pupils by enabling them to become more confident in working independently.
- Develop the curriculum in order to raise achievement by:
 - evolving a strategy that exploits links between subjects to enable pupils to apply and develop their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology
 - making learning more relevant to the lives of the pupils.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on the quality of education by:
 - developing a coherent approach to subject leadership which includes the systematic monitoring of pupils' attainment and of their provision across the school
 - ensuring that all school policies are regularly reviewed and updated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy school and most are willing to develop new skills and knowledge. Learning is particularly strong when pupils are involved in practical activities that have a clear purpose that the pupils understand. This was very apparent in a mixed-age class where pupils were challenged to investigate the features of two- and three- dimensional shapes. Good guidance from well deployed adults enabled pupils to ask questions, share ideas and take their understanding to a deeper level. Many pupils are unsure of taking ownership for their learning, for example, by using their skills to research for themselves or to solve problems.

Progress is accelerating across the school and this is lifting attainment. By the end of Year 6, attainment in English, mathematics and science is broadly average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in their personal development, while their academic progress is satisfactory. Improvements to teaching and the better use of assessment are starting to rectify this weakness. The school has secure data that indicate that more pupils are now being effectively challenged and are, therefore, on course to reach the levels of which they are capable.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They like school, and this is reflected in their above average attendance. The overwhelming majority of pupils report that they feel safe at school. They have a good awareness of any dangers that they may face in everyday life. Pupils' good behaviour contributes to a mostly calm and peaceful atmosphere in lessons. They know about the factors that affect health and most want to take account of these in their daily lives. Pupils are a valued part of the local parish and they make a positive contribution to it through, for example, contributing to events

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organised by the Rossendale Catholic Cluster. Their contribution to the wider community is satisfactory and the school recognises this as being an area it needs to develop. Given their average attainment and mostly effective good personal skills, pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their next stage of education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
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?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory reflecting pupils' sound progress. Strengths exist in the contribution of the new teaching team. Adults' relationships with pupils are good and behaviour is very well managed. Lessons are generally well organised and structured but the purpose of lessons is not always explained clearly enough to pupils. Where this is the case, it reduces the scope for pupils to become involved in evaluating their own progress and identifying ways of improving their work. At times, new technology is used effectively to bring learning alive and ICT enhances learning well. Good opportunities are often given for pupils to talk together to extend their thoughts and deepen their understanding. Generally expectations for pupils to initiate aspects of their own learning and to develop their confidence to work independently are too low. This limits the ability of pupils to express their individuality.

The school is currently reviewing the quality of its curriculum. While a number of curricular initiatives have been put in place, the school is yet to develop a coherent curriculum plan that links everything together. As a result, the benefits of linking subjects together and of

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making lessons more relevant to pupils are not fully exploited. Strengths exist in aspects of the provision. For example, in literacy, improvements to reading and writing are occurring as a result of the introduction of daily sessions throughout the school to develop pupils' understanding of letters and sounds. Pupils benefit from a range of educational visitors and visits. Theatre groups, drama sessions and visits by artists, such as an illustrator, widen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. Links to community groups, for example, Groundwork, widen pupils' experiences by, for example, developing team skills in constructing shelters outdoors. Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils' personal development benefits enormously by attending a residential centre for two nights.

Staff know the pupils well and provide good quality care, guidance and support. There are well-targeted interventions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to help them cope with their difficulties. Good partnerships with outside agencies from the health, education and welfare services assist in offering good support to pupils and also to families in need.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and governing body have provided a positive direction for the school through difficult circumstances. While the day-to-day running of the school is good, some important elements of management are not sharp enough. The implementation of procedures to promote effective subject leadership has been delayed, as has the development of systems to monitor the performance of staff and the quality of provision. Good guidance from the local authority has supported the headteacher and the governing body in its self-evaluation. As a result, the school has a clear picture of areas for improvement, which is set out in an effective school development plan. The increasingly effective senior management team is soundly communicating its ambition to improve the school.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive of the school and works satisfactorily to guide and direct it. It ensures that the school complies with safeguarding requirements. These are satisfactory overall because, while pupils are safe and secure and good child protection procedures are established, some associated policies are not systematically monitored, reviewed and updated if required. The school makes a good contribution to the cohesion within school and the local parish but the contribution to developing cohesion in the wider locality, within the United Kingdom and abroad, is underdeveloped.

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Good partnerships with support agencies and other schools in the cluster enhance the quality of education for pupils very well. However, links with other schools are not fully exploited to maximise opportunities for staff development and training. Parents and carers, although supportive of the school, receive insufficient guidance about how to help with their children's learning at home. Strategies to maintain regular communication about progress and to provide information about how to support learning are satisfactory overall. The school is committed to supporting all pupils and in promoting equality of opportunity for all and minimising any racial discrimination. The school's finances are prudently managed and given the current outcomes it gives satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Strong and highly effective leadership for the Early Years Foundation Stage is accelerating learning rapidly. The new leader has a crystal clear vision for future developments and a high ambition to provide the best possible education for the children. This is reflected in a rigorous and accurate appraisal of the way forward for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The quality of the assessments of children's development has been strengthened and a complete overhaul of the way children learn has been completed. Effective teamwork with teaching assistants is well established, and a very strong staff team has been established which shares the same determination to give the best possible start to the children.

Teaching is good with outstanding features. Staff bring learning alive and make it fun. Adult-led activities successfully promote good learning in early reading, writing, mathematics and aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world. During one excellent session, children were led through an array of letters and sounds in a pacy but very imaginative way and every one was totally engaged. There is a good emphasis being placed on basic skills, within a creative approach to learning. Children develop mostly good

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levels of personal, social and emotional development and are settled and happy. An excellent indoor learning area is very well organised to encourage children to explore all areas of learning and develop their confidence and independence. Outdoor provision is less strong in promoting children's overall good outcomes, because there are some gaps in resources available to support the full range of children's learning.

Parents and carers are successfully encouraged to be involved in their children's education and the recent introduction of a Record of Achievement is enabling shared information about each child's development and progress. In recent years, children's progress has been satisfactory but is currently good and accelerating, as a result of the energy, vigour and high expectations of the new leader.

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	1

Views of parents and carers

Around two fifths of the parents and carers returned their questionnaires. The vast majority rate the school highly and value the quality of education provided. Most parents and carers praised the support it offers. The vast majority are very happy with the attitudes encouraged in their children and behaviour is considered to be good. Staff are said to be approachable and most parents and carers feel that their views are valued. A few parents and carers are unsure whether their children are making the progress of which they are capable because of the negative impact of the high levels of staff turnover in recent years. The inspection findings endorse most of the positive views of the parents and carers. Whilst attitudes are generally good some aspects could be better. Some pupils could develop greater confidence to be independent and take responsibility for their learning. Regarding progress, there is scope for pupils to do better and for attainment to be higher, however, the settled team now in place is already having a positive impact on learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Stacksteads, Bacup 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 inspector received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	59	11	38	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	66	10	34	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	48	13	45	2	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	45	12	41	2	7	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	15	52	12	41	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	45	13	45	0	0	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	52	14	48	0	0	0	0
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)	14	48	11	38	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	52	12	41	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	59	11	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	38	15	52	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	52	9	31	2	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	72	8	28	0	0	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



20 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Stacksteads, Bacup, OL13 8LD

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleague to your school recently. We were made to feel very welcome and enjoyed our time sharing lessons and lunch with you. Your school is satisfactory and improving. You have all done well to deal with the many changes that have occurred in recent years. Despite these, you have maintained a happy outlook, behave well and care for each other. Your rate of learning is satisfactory and now beginning to improve. This is because your new teachers are beginning to understand you and develop ways of making your lessons harder, but at the same time more interesting and fun. You clearly like school and enjoy what it offers. You work hard and usually try your best.

Your headteacher is dedicated to making the school a better place. It is safe and secure and those of you who have particular needs are guided and supported well. Many aspects of the school are being improved. Your school is looking more closely at how well you are doing and whether your lessons are as good as they could be and I have asked your teachers to do more of this in future. I have also asked that some important policies are kept up to date. In order to make lessons even better for you, we have asked that the way you learn and what you learn is adjusted, so that it is more exciting and relevant to you. Also I have asked the school to give you more chances to become independent in lessons and that you are more involved in assessing your own progress and attainment so that you have a better understanding of how to improve your work.

I hope that you continue to be polite and helpful and work with the adults in the school to improve your work further.

Yours sincerely

David Byrne

Lead inspector

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