

St Joseph's RC Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101803
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	355073
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Dunn

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine Jones
Headteacher	Tamsyn Lawlor
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw fourteen lessons taught by eight staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning, monitoring, a range of policy documents and records, governing body meeting minutes and a range of pupils' work. They also analysed 132 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and 14 from staff.

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

- The extent to which boys make consistently good progress in writing.
- How effectively the school uses assessment information to ensure that provision meets the needs of different groups, supporting its drive to eradicate gaps in performance between them.
- The success of the curriculum in promoting opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes, and securing good or better personal development outcomes.
- How successfully leaders at different levels are using extensive self-evaluation to promote further improvement.

Information about the school

This is an average-size infant school. The large majority of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Above-average numbers also speak English as an additional language, but very few are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above average, the majority of these have speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is just above average. The school has achieved the Artsmark Gold award. There is no childcare provision 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

St Joseph's is a good school. The excellent care embedded at all levels makes a significant contribution to pupils' good achievement and well-being, and their outstanding feelings of safety. Pupils are happy, welcoming and confident in this bright, nurturing environment. The high quality guidance and support for pupils whose circumstances might make them potentially vulnerable, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mean they make progress at least in line with their peers, and sometimes more quickly. The school has excellent relationships with parents and carers. 'We find the school to be a warm and caring environment' was a comment made by one parent, typical of the overwhelmingly positive views expressed about the school.

Children get off to a good start in Nursery. Supported by strong relationships with adults, and the stimulating environment, they develop a good range of skills and personal qualities. Children's good gains in their learning continue in Reception, particularly when they are given opportunities to initiate their own activities in the stimulating outdoor area. Achievement is also good during small group focus work. However, some sessions limit children's choice of activity, and miss opportunities to allow those not directed by an adult to access all areas of learning. Consequently, children sometimes lack enough purpose and challenge to achieve well, particularly when restricted to the indoor classroom. The good progress continues in Key Stage 1 so that, although attainment is average overall, levels at the end of Year 2 are sometimes above average when compared nationally. However, there is still some inconsistency in rates of progress, because, within a profile of good teaching overall, some satisfactory teaching remains. A drive to improve assessment procedures has been effective in engaging pupils more in their learning. Pupils generally know what they need to do in a task to succeed and are often involved in checking their own work against the criteria that have been set. However, in a minority of satisfactory lessons, teachers do not use their own assessment of pupils' capabilities well enough to ensure the right level of challenge for different groups.

Targeted interventions, for example the good quality support sessions for pupils who speak English as an additional language, effectively contribute to the school's drive to reduce gaps in performance between different groups. Similarly, in whole-class lessons, teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the quality of learning for a range of pupils. The school has correctly identified boys' writing as an area where progress is slower. Although the majority make good progress, this proportion is lower than for other areas. This is partly due to missed opportunities to motivate pupils to write for real purposes, for example, actually sending letters they have written to the intended recipient. Similarly, the stimulus for writing is not always challenging or inspiring enough to promote a higher level of achievement. The school has already identified that missed opportunities to make links between subjects contribute to this. Good links with information and communication technology and mathematics already exist, including regular opportunities

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for pupils to use and apply skills to real-life contexts. Consequently, the proportion of pupils now making outstanding progress in mathematics is higher than in reading and writing.

Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, the school has developed an accurate view of its effectiveness. There is no sense of complacency in areas where good progress has already been made, and extensive ongoing improvement plans created by leaders at all levels demonstrate the good level of drive and ambition. The governing body supports and challenges leaders effectively, using a good range of information to monitor and evaluate the impact of actions taken. Teaching, the curriculum and care are all better in overall quality than at the time of the last inspection, raising pupils' achievement from satisfactory to good. Taking all of this into account, the school has a good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of ♦ boys making at least good progress in writing to the same level as in other subjects by:
 - providing more opportunities for them to write for real purposes
 - making consistently good links between subjects to give pupils more opportunity to apply their basic skills.
- Raise the quality of all teaching to be consistently good by September 2011, and increase the proportion that is outstanding by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information more sharply to set tasks with the right level of challenge for all groups.
- Improve the quality of provision in Reception:
 - ensuring the environment, particularly indoors, provides children with sufficient challenge and stimulation to promote better achievement when not directed by an adult
 - giving children more opportunities to make good gains in their learning through self-chosen activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. As one pupil pointed out to an inspector, she was not 'challenged' because she was wearing an official visitor's badge. Take-up of sports clubs and activities is good, including enthusiastic participation in the dance club, and pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. 'Playground Pals' and members of the school council carry out their duties proudly, and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Pupils also make a strong contribution to the community through their polite, welcoming conduct throughout the school. Fund-raising work for charities and the involvement of some pupils in music and dance festivals broadens their sense of community beyond the school. However, there are missed opportunities to promote a better awareness and understanding of different beliefs and religions through links to a range of places of worship. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and they engage enthusiastically in multicultural events

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such as 'International Week', contributing well to the school's Artsmark Gold award. They respond positively to opportunities to reflect on the world around them, as well as their own and others' experiences. Pupils' good behaviour reflects their clear understanding of right and wrong.

From starting points that are typically below the expected levels, pupils make good progress developing their basic skills. This, together with involvement in knowing how to improve their work, the development of good personal qualities and average attendance, prepares pupils well for their next schools and life beyond. Pupils are enthusiastic in lessons and keen to do well. A Year 1 mathematics activity, using a counting stick number line, successfully engaged pupils, who clearly enjoyed the increasing challenge as the teacher introduced tens and then gradually removed the numbers pupils could see. In the same lesson, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieved well because the teaching assistant used additional resources and questions during the introduction to sustain their engagement. Subsequently, when set tasks, they were allowed enough independence that they were not too reliant on adult support to succeed. Pupils enjoy working collaboratively and support each other well. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils had to apply their measuring skills and knowledge of shape to create 'Stop' signs for 'The Naughty Bus', the theme of the forthcoming book week. Pupils discussed mistakes they were making, working together to achieve the desired outcome. Where necessary, adults posed effective questions to extend pupils' thinking and encourage them to reflect on what they were doing. However, pupils' day-to-day written work does not always reflect their learning so positively. Work on display or in special writing books reflects a higher level of expectation, and tends to be of better quality in presentation, content and technical accuracy.

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
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?

Excellent transition procedures at all stages support pupils well, and are typical of the priority given to pupils' well-being. Alternative arrangements made on an individual basis cater very well for pupils whose needs may make them particularly vulnerable during periods of change. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced significantly, and effective early intervention ensures instances where individuals' attendance falls below this significant level are extremely rare. A generous allocation of skilled and effective teaching assistants supports a range of pupils effectively, both within class and during additional intervention sessions. For example, in a Year 2 writing intervention, boys in particular felt confident to share, discuss and challenge each other's ideas in the supportive small-group environment.

Teachers generally make accurate assessments of pupils' capabilities, though assessments of pupils' levels tend to focus on special pieces of work rather than the full range of learning. In a Year 2 English lesson, pupils demonstrated their good understanding of how to write an effective letter in character, by accurately using a checklist to identify in their own work where they had successfully met requirements. ♦ Teachers' questioning often encourages pupils to think more deeply and to reflect and develop their ideas. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson on floating and sinking, when one pupil suggested, 'small things float' the teacher asked him to reflect on whether all boats are small. However, in lessons where teaching is satisfactory, the pace is often too slow, delaying

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the opportunity for pupils to engage in independent or collaborative tasks. Marking regularly shows pupils how to improve their work, though the impact is sometimes lost, as pupils do not always have the opportunity to respond. As well as the gains pupils make academically, the curriculum is well organised and imaginatively planned to support pupils' personal development, particularly with regard to good enrichment opportunities such as the regular theme weeks. However, in routine lessons, though at least satisfactory, links between subjects are less well developed. ♦

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?

The headteacher has secured a common purpose, ambition and drive for improvement among staff at all levels. In this positive environment, there is a strong sense of teamwork. However, although improvement planning identifies appropriate areas for development, it does not always focus sharply enough on the most significant aspects that will promote more rapid improvement. Parents and carers make a significant contribution to the school's development. As well as expressing their views through regular surveys, at the school's invitation, a number formed a working party to find solutions to areas of concern. The school's 'Bring a family man' event was also successful in engaging positive male role models to work with pupils in school. A good range of partnerships supports pupils' learning and development effectively, such as increasing sporting and musical opportunities. Links with other agencies and professionals contribute well to the outstanding care and support for pupils. These are also an important part of the school's well-developed safeguarding systems. Effective policies are established and regularly reviewed, including contingency arrangements if key members of staff are not on site. A good range of training, including induction procedures for new staff, ensures all are well informed and follow procedures.

The governing body is mindful of the need to support staff, but also effectively challenges the school's leaders and holds them to account. For example, members scrutinise the reports the headteacher sends them, setting questions in advance of the meeting in order that extra information can be prepared and presented as required. The governing body also has a good grasp of its statutory duties, for example the promotion of equality and community cohesion. The successful drive to close, and ultimately eradicate, any gaps in performance between different groups is at the heart of the school's plans for improvement. The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind and there have been no reported racial incidents in recent years. The school's community cohesion audit and action plan accurately reflect strengths and development needs in this area. A cohesive

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community within itself, the school also effectively develops pupils' understanding of different contexts internationally, through good global links. The action plan correctly identifies the need for increased opportunities for pupils to learn about a wider range of beliefs within the United Kingdom.

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	2
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

The warm welcome and stimulating environment in Nursery mean children come to school happily and eager to engage. Children sustain interest in self-chosen activities well in Nursery, and in the vibrant outdoor area shared by the Reception classes. Across the Early Years Foundation Stage, good use of the outdoor environment effectively broadens the learning experience for children. Adults in Nursery took the opportunity of rainy weather during the inspection to encourage the children to experiment by mixing different substances in puddles, including powder paint, washing-up liquid and oil. Children were fascinated as they observed what happened and enjoyed making choices in their investigations. Meanwhile, in the Reception, some children used rain from the water butt to water their plants under the shelter while pondering, 'I wonder what colour the flowers will be?' The teaching assistant took the opportunity to discuss with the children how to care for the plants to ensure that the flowers grow successfully. Other children developed their language and social skills using the flexible and imaginative outdoor role-play area of the naughty bus and bus station, following the book week theme. Through their observations, adults are responsive to children's needs and interests, to either interact and provide good challenge and support in the moment, or take notes for future planning.

Children demonstrate a firm awareness of their own safety and that of others through their good behaviour and conduct. Children interact increasingly well with each other as they move through the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that by Reception they chat

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happily together over their mid-morning snack about what they have been doing. They understand that eating fruit helps them stay healthy. In Nursery, they make good progress learning routines and developing good habits in short sessions of adult-directed learning. This prepares them effectively for the Reception Year, where children achieve well when working in small focus groups. This is also because teaching of these groups, such as precise modelling of letter sounds, is good. Sometimes whole-class carpet sessions are similarly effective. For example, in a communication, language and literacy session, children made good use of the displays of letter sounds and key words, working together to write sentences about the naughty bus. However, at other times, the pace slows and children are less responsive to this style of learning. Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage has led to the improvements in the outdoor environment and helped firmly establish the excellent engagement with parents and carers from the beginning.

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

The inspection team received completed questionnaires from a higher proportion of parents and carers than typically seen. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers that answered each question within the questionnaire expressed positive views about most aspects of the school's work and were unanimous that the school is well led and managed and takes account of their suggestions and concerns. A number of questionnaires also contained additional comments, the large majority of which were positive. The most commonly repeating themes were high levels of satisfaction in the quality of care the school provides and praising the improvements made under the leadership of the headteacher. Inspectors followed up the few concerns raised with the school, but these did not have a common thread.

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 Infant School 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 132 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 227 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	90	68	41	31	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	81	61	46	35	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	76	58	49	37	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	54	57	43	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	77	58	53	40	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	70	53	58	44	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	70	53	58	44	1	1	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)	58	44	61	46	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	64	48	61	46	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	53	59	45	2	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	48	64	48	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	79	60	51	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	85	64	45	34	2	2	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.



14 February 2011




Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Infant School, Croydon SE19 3NX



Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and we are very grateful to you for helping us find out all about your school. You clearly enjoy coming to school and we can see why  it is a good school. Here are some of the things we particularly liked.

- All adults in the school care for you exceptionally well and help you to feel extremely safe so that your achievement is good.
- The school has excellent links with your parents and carers, which also helps you to do well.
- Your behaviour is good.
- You are making good progress and developing good personal skills and qualities so that you are ready to move on to your next schools when you leave.
- Teaching is good and adults are helping you to assess your own work well, so you can see how to make it better.
- Teaching assistants support a number of you effectively to help you make at least as much progress as others in the class.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is good.

Your headteacher and others responsible for running the school have good plans to make it even better. To help with this, we have asked them to make sure that boys make as much progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics by giving you tasks to do for a real reason, sometimes linked to what you are learning in other subjects. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that lessons are not too easy or too hard for all of you. In Reception, we have asked adults to make sure that there are always interesting choices for children, and that they can choose their own activities more often.

You can all help by continuing to behave well and always trying your very hardest to do your best and improve your work, particularly with your writing, boys.



Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn

Lead inspector

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