

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123209
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380621
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	Barbara Atcheson

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	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Darren Baker
Headteacher	Claire Kerr
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	21–22 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Barbara Atcheson

Additional inspector

Richard Sutton

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons taught by eight teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and equality, minutes of governing body meetings and planning documents. They scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated questionnaires returned from 47 parents and carers as well as those returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Joseph's is a smaller than average sized primary school. Its pupils come mainly from Catholic families in the town and in surrounding villages. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into one Reception Year class. There is an after-school club on the school site which is managed by the governing body. The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

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

Key findings

- St Joseph's is a good school. It provides a warm, welcoming environment where pupils feel cared for, safe and secure and in this environment make good progress. The school is on a journey of sustained improvement and has many strengths but is not yet outstanding because although teaching is good, and some is outstanding, a few inconsistencies exist.
- Pupils build well on the good start they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All groups, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, achieve well and the current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach above average levels of attainment by the end of the year.
- Teaching is good. Teachers use their own subject knowledge well and relationships are good. However, the effective practice of marking to targets which are accurately matched to the needs of pupils in literacy is not reflected in mathematics. Where pupils play an active part in their own learning and teachers give them measurable success criteria and keep a check on learning throughout the lesson, progress is accelerated. However, this is not always the case.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils is good; the result of the school's caring and inclusive ethos which contributes to the very strong promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour in lessons contributes well to the positive climate for learning in the school.
- Leadership and management are good. The improvements made since the last inspection have been driven by the effective leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by members of the governing body and leaders at all levels. In particular, the effective management of teaching and monitoring of performance has led to better teaching which in turn has resulted in improved progress, especially for more able pupils at the end of Year 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by ensuring that all teachers:

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- Use assessment data accurately to plan work in mathematics and set targets that challenge pupils appropriately at their own level
- give pupils feedback on their next steps in learning to meet their targets in mathematics and provide sufficient time to make those improvements
- set measurable success criteria
- increase the opportunities for pupils to play a more active role in their own learning and regularly check on pupils' learning throughout each lesson.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

A very large majority of parents and carers believe that their children are making good progress and a large majority believe that their needs are met by the school. This is fully supported by the inspection evidence. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the vast majority of children arrive with skills and understanding that are typical for their age. There is a strong and successful focus on teaching phonics (sounds and letters) to develop children's early communication skills. Exciting activities and good teaching enable children to make good progress, particularly in their personal development and their language and communication skills.

Pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, continue to make good progress and achieve well throughout the school because teachers support pupils effectively and use their subject knowledge well to develop pupils' learning. Skilled teaching assistants work with small groups of pupils to ensure that any gaps in their learning and attainment are quickly closed.

Pupils, including the small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and those eligible for free school meals, achieve well because of good teaching and their good attitudes to learning. This was seen in a typical mathematics lesson. All groups of pupils in the Year 3 class busily worked together at their various levels to solve one- and two-step problems, using what mathematical facts they knew and understood. For example, one girl worked out that out of 30 children, there would be seven hockey teams of four children and two left over because she knew $5 \times 4 = 20$ and $2 \times 4 = 8$. The same good attitude to learning was seen in pupils' approach to reading. Year 1 pupils confidently used the contents, index and glossary of an unfamiliar factual book to find out facts about kangaroos. They used their phonic skills well to sound out unfamiliar words and self-corrected when they realised the context of the word. By the end of Year 2, a significantly above average proportion of pupils reach higher than the nationally expected levels in reading. Attainment in writing and mathematics is also above average. A large majority of Year 6 pupils are on track to reach higher and, for some, much higher, reading levels than found nationally. The group who read to inspectors liked to read books by authors such as Charles Dickens and J.R.R. Tolkien. They were adept at explaining the different techniques authors use to create moods and feelings and to captivate the reader. They were skilled at finding and articulating examples from the unfamiliar text they

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were reading in order to justify their predictions. Attainment in writing and mathematics is securely above average by the time that pupils leave the school.

Quality of teaching

Almost all pupils and a large majority of parents and carers say that teaching is good. Inspection evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of work over time supports this. The way that teachers plan work enthuses pupils so that they want to learn and interact in a positive way. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's own interests were cultivated as a group of children became totally absorbed in making their own musical instruments out of scrap material. At lunchtime, children who were busy making repeated patterns with pasta shapes in play dough were reluctant to stop because they were so involved in their task. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils made outstanding progress in experimenting with writing narrative for a visual text because their work was based on a visit from a father who had shown them how he edited advertisements in his job and this had made their learning relevant. High expectations from the teacher, together with a high level of challenge and work accurately matched to the pupils' abilities, meant that all groups of pupils used technical vocabulary extremely well and were highly motivated to work hard.

Teachers use assessment data accurately to plan work and set targets that challenge pupils appropriately at their own level in literacy but this is not so evident in mathematics. Similarly, teachers' marking in literacy ensures pupils know what is needed to meet those targets and have the time to make improvements, but this is less well developed in mathematics. In a few lessons, the teacher talks for too long, pupils become passive and there are limited opportunities for pupils to work independently and use their initiative. Clear success criteria helped a Year 4 class make good progress in writing a persuasive letter about the Olympic Games and frequent checks on pupils' learning ensured that the pace of learning was quick. However, in a few lessons, pupils do not have this advantage and the pace of learning slows and work is not as detailed or precise.

Teaching, and the role models that all adults provide, promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development extremely well. The curriculum is also effectively planned to ensure that there are a wealth of opportunities for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, assemblies and links within other areas of learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all parents and carers and pupils believe that pupils are safe and a very large majority believe that the standard of behaviour is good and that lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour. Parents who spoke to inspectors said that they appreciated the ethos of the school and the high level of care, guidance and support given to their children. This contributes effectively to the development of pupils' personal qualities. Pupils are considerate, respectful and polite to adults and to each

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other. They display good levels of thoughtfulness and this makes a positive contribution to a well-ordered, safe school. Pupils work and play harmoniously and attendance is above average because pupils enjoy school. Those who have been at the school all the way through say that this has always been the case. Although they are knowledgeable about the different types and forms of bullying, including physical, emotional and cyber bullying and how to deal with it, they are adamant that it is very rare. They are confident that there will always be someone who will listen to them if anything ever did happen.

The popular after-school club provides a good opportunity for social interaction. Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy the activities which provide an informal but valuable variety of learning experiences.

Leadership and management

The headteacher communicates high expectations and galvanises the enthusiasm of staff. Members of the governing body and senior leaders work well as a team and share the headteacher's focus on improvement. As a result of the effective way in which the school's performance is managed, and good self-evaluation, pupils achieve well and the school has made a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The school is quick to tackle areas of weakness. A significantly above average proportion of pupils now reach higher than nationally expected levels of attainment at the end of Year 2 and, despite a cohort-related dip in 2011, there has been a trend of improvement in mathematics. Members of the governing body play an important strategic role in school development and offer a good balance of support and challenge to leaders. All of this confirms the school's good capacity for future sustained improvement.

The monitoring of teaching and learning has brought about improvements and the school is now firmly focused on ironing out the inconsistencies that prevent teaching being outstanding. Teachers say that the impact of professional development has been positive. They readily share ideas and say that courses on numeracy have given them renewed confidence and that they find observing more experienced colleagues teaching highly beneficial for their development as well as improving pupils' learning and achievement.

School leaders ensure that the curriculum is well managed and tailored to meet the needs of the pupils. Key literacy and numeracy skills are developed well and good opportunities are provided for pupils to use these skills across different subjects. Pupils have opportunities to discuss national and international events from both a moral and social viewpoint and to learn about different traditions and cultures. These opportunities add much to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and awareness.

The high level of support given to pupils with disabilities or who have special educational needs allows them to access all that is on offer within the school. It also demonstrates the promotion of equality of opportunity that is at the heart of all the

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school's work. There is no discrimination. Staff are trained in the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and school policies ensure that they know and understand how to prevent and tackle all types of bullying and harassment. Members of the governing body play an important strategic role in this and are thoroughly involved in the whole work of the school. They, alongside school leaders, also make sure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.



23 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Thame OX9 2AB.

Thank you for being so friendly when we came to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. You were very helpful and polite. Your school gives you a good standard of education and, because there are a lot of things your school does well, you all make good progress.

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire. We know from that and from what you told us that you enjoy school and that you feel very safe. We were impressed with your good behaviour and enjoyed seeing some of your interesting lessons. We were pleased to see that you understand how important it is to come to school regularly. We could see that you get on with each other well and help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and other staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better, so we have suggested ways to improve teaching. We have asked the school to make sure that all teachers give you the right level of targets and work to help you improve in mathematics. We have also asked them to make sure that marking in mathematics gives your clear pointers for improvement and enough time to act on the guidance. Finally, we want teachers to make sure your learning is regularly checked throughout the lesson and for you to take some of the responsibility for your own learning.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest to do your very best all the time so that you are even more successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson
Lead inspector

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