

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110094
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	356688
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sinead Hall
Headteacher	Alison Webster
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed and eight teachers were seen. In addition, four part-lessons conducted by teaching assistants were observed. A scrutiny of pupils' written work was carried out. Inspectors held discussions with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents, including policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of pupils, self-evaluation records and assessment information. The inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires from 84 parents and carers and 94 pupils.

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

- Inspectors explored the impact of programmes to support the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also looked closely at the progress of pupils with English as an additional language.
- They considered how well more-able pupils were supported and challenged to do their best.
- They evaluated both the quality of assessment opportunities provided by teachers and the use pupils make of them to promote their learning.

Information about the school

St Joseph's is smaller than most primary schools. A large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased and is now average. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is also average. A few pupils in this group are at an early stage of learning English. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a single Reception class.

The school has Healthy Schools status.

The school runs an on-site breakfast and after-school club ? the Link Club.

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

St Joseph's is a satisfactory school. Pupils are well cared for by the staff and they enjoy coming to school, as reflected in their attendance which is above average. Attainment in Year 6 in 2010 was average in both English and mathematics. Attainment at the nationally expected level 4 has been improving in the last few years, but it has remained a little below average at level 5. School leaders are aware of this imbalance. They are currently modifying the curriculum with a view to providing all pupils with more stretching and engaging experiences. This initiative is too recent to have impacted on pupils' achievement. However, the rate of pupils' progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is improving. Overall, outcomes for pupils are satisfactory and this means St Joseph's prepares pupils satisfactorily for the next stages of their lives.

Children get off to a sound start in Reception. While they enjoy their time there, very recent changes to provision have still to bed in. Leadership expertise in Reception has some limitations and recent changes to assessment systems have not yet dovetailed sufficiently to inform planning well. Some opportunities are missed to promote children's independence and challenge more-able children.

There are evident strengths in pupils' personal development. Pupils know how to keep healthy and have a good awareness of how to stay safe. They behave well and play harmoniously with each other. They make effective use of numerous opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. Pupils' capacity to learn independently or collaboratively is not as well developed as it might be. Opportunities are missed for them to take an active role in evaluating their learning and identifying next steps. Some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that pupils, especially the more-able, are not regularly challenged to the full extent.

The capacity of the school for improvement is satisfactory. Leaders are effectively managing recent staffing changes, which have resulted in a significant restructuring of managerial responsibilities. The school's detailed tracking system and wide-ranging monitoring activities ensure that leaders have a broadly accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. This information is used purposefully, but not to best effect to create the sharp strategic focus and momentum necessary for swift improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of school self-evaluation by:
 - ensuring that the information gained from monitoring activities is used more purposefully to provide strategic direction for the school's work
- Raise pupils' achievement by:

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- embedding new initiatives to develop pupils' capacity for independent learning and their collaborative skills
- improving opportunities for pupils to take a more active role in evaluating their learning and deciding what they need to do next
- ensuring all pupils, especially the more-able, are consistently challenged
- Improve the quality of provision in Reception by:
 - providing better opportunities for children to become more independent
 - ensuring teaching has high expectations for the progress of more-able children
 - ensuring greater consistency across assessment procedures to inform planning
 - developing leadership skills to ensure recent changes to provision improve outcomes for children.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their attainment when they join Year 1 is average. Currently, the attainment of pupils is slightly above average in English and average in mathematics. Pupils' independent learning skills are variable. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 6, more-able pupils, including those pupils with English as an additional language, made good use of an open-ended task. They collected and recorded data accurately and succeeded in using this information to assess and handle unreliable data. On other occasions, progress for more-able pupils is restricted when tasks do not offer sufficient variety or challenge. Pupils' capacity to work collaboratively is sometimes compromised, for example, when instructions are pitched in 'adult-speak' which makes it difficult for pupils to understand quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress including in one-to-one lessons with teaching assistants. Their progress is more marked when activities engage their interest and are clearly sequenced. For example, a pupil with severe disabilities developed confidence from completing small steps of increasing difficulty and eventually succeeded unaided in grouping words according to their initial letter.

A large majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They are pleased that they had a 'voice' in the recent redesign of the curriculum. They say they are enjoying the opportunities to work more flexibly across subjects to develop their skills. They enjoy working with their sports coaches, like eating healthily and know the advantages of regular exercise, as reflected in the school's award. Pupils' well developed understanding of spiritual terminology is reflected in the prayers they compose. They feel strongly about issues and express compassion for the victims of the Japanese earthquake. Pupils report that everyone supports and values each other. They feel safe because they can readily approach the staff with any concerns. Pupils who have positions of responsibility make effective contributions to the community, for example, as school councillors, peer mediators and in other leadership roles. Other pupils make a good contribution to the wider community, for example, in partnership projects involving homeless people. Pupils' workplace skills are satisfactory overall due to their average attainment in literacy and numeracy.

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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	2
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?

Teaching has some strengths. Teachers mostly manage pupils well. They usually make effective links with pupils' prior learning and sometimes make use of imaginative resources to capture pupils' interest. Better teaching is characterised by precise, probing questions and sensible strategies to intervene when teachers notice that not all pupils may have totally grasped the point. In other lessons, the focus of pupils' learning is less sharply defined. It is sometimes unclear what skills teachers expect pupils to have acquired by the end of the lesson and how both parties can measure progress. On occasion, the pace of learning drops. Lesson endings are not used to best effect to help pupils learn from others, or refine and develop their ideas independently. Similarly, although some pupils are helped through teachers' marking to reflect on and improve their work, this is not yet consistent practice. This reduces opportunities for pupils to be more actively involved in taking responsibility for their learning.

The curriculum is adequately matched to pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from a good range of enrichment activities which include dance, choir and visitors, such as dental hygienists. The school's welcoming atmosphere ensures that pupils of different nationalities integrate well with each other. This is an important factor in helping pupils with English as an additional language acquire the oral and social skills necessary to reach similar levels of attainment as their peers. Leaders have taken effective action to strengthen provision to improve the rate of progress for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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While partnership activities provide some opportunities for able and gifted pupils, outlets in school for developing their talents are more limited.

Staff are well trained in first-aid procedures and are pro-active in ensuring pupils are closely supervised and supported at break-times. Pupils 'at-risk' are quickly identified, monitored closely and supported well through effective work with external agencies. The school's considerable efforts to engage parents and carers who are hard to reach have resulted in successful outcomes, for example in improving pupils' social skills. The progress of pupils with individual educational plans is regularly tracked. Monitoring needs further development to ensure that smart targets are sharply aligned to the practice in lessons, so that the impact of the support these pupils receive can be evaluated more precisely. The well organised Link Club provides ample resources to cater for the needs of all groups of pupils. The school pays due attention to attendance matters and consequently pupils' attendance has been consistently sustained at an above-average level.

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 school is currently in a transitional period as a result of promotions of members of the former leadership team to posts in other schools. New staff appointments are being mentored effectively by the restructured leadership team to develop their skills. Clearly established routines and well organised documentation ensure that procedures are clearly understood and facilitate the smooth running of the school. Many monitoring activities, for example those of the records of pupils' progress, are thorough and detailed. The clear identification of next steps to provide strategic direction to raise achievement is less assured. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory. Several of the procedures are of high quality and leaders have good plans in place to enhance site security. Members of the governing body have acquired a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school has good links with parents and carers. These are strengthened through curriculum discussions, the recently established parents' forum and regular communication about the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Partnerships with outside agencies, for example sporting organisations, support pupils' well-being very effectively. Recent monitoring by local authority partners of key aspects of provision has identified clear priorities for improvement. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion as policies have been translated into practical actions to ensure pupils acquire a greater understanding of local and global citizenship. The school promotes equalities satisfactorily, as reflected in satisfactory outcomes for all groups of pupils.

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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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills and knowledge when they join Reception are broadly average. They make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. Children enjoy learning through play and make good use of 'real-life' resources to develop their understanding of the wider world. They engage readily in physical exercise and wash their hands after messy activities without prompting. They cooperate well with each others outdoors. The curriculum offers an effective balance of indoor and outdoor activities. Limitations exist in opportunities for children to develop independent learning skills and children are too quick to resort to adults for help to resolve minor disagreements indoors. Insufficient use is made of open-ended questions to extend children's thinking. Practitioners' expectations for more-able children are not high enough to ensure a faster rate of progress. Regular assessments are made to support children's next steps in phonics, but recent revisions to assessment procedures have not yet bedded in to impact on planning across all areas of learning. The effectiveness of leadership has been compromised by recent staff changes. A recent review conducted with external consultants has identified priority areas and the school has acted swiftly to address these. The staff work effectively with individual parents and carers to support vulnerable children. They make good use of external services, for example speech and language specialists, to enable children to overcome linguistic difficulties.

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

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was above average. The statistical responses, as reflected in the table below, and the tone of the comments received, indicate that a very large majority of parents and carers have a positive view of the school's effectiveness. In particular, they commend the quality of communications and the 'rounded' education provided by the school. A few concerns were expressed about rates of progress and the challenge offered for more-able pupils. Inspectors found that progress overall was satisfactory and improving but they agreed that more could be done to extend more-able pupils.

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 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 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 194 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	63	28	33	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	57	34	40	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	46	55	33	39	3	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	40	44	52	6	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	54	36	43	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	55	34	40	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	55	34	40	3	4	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)	43	51	36	43	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	48	41	49	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	39	41	49	2	2	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	33	46	55	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	55	32	38	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	62	28	33	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.



24 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Newbury RG14 2AW

I would like to thank you for your help when the inspection team visited your school recently. This is what we found.

Yours is a satisfactory school and there are some good things about it.

- The staff look after you well and you feel safe in school.
- You enjoy school. You behave well, mix easily with people of different nationalities and show concern for people who suffer hardship.
- Your progress, while satisfactory, is improving.

When you leave school at the end of Year 6, your attainment in English and mathematics is average. To raise your attainment and help you learn better, there are some things we have asked the staff to do.

- Make sure that recent changes to the curriculum help you learn well when working independently and with other pupils.
- Give you better chances to think closely about how well you are learning and what you need to do next.
- Make sure all pupils, especially those who find learning easier, are stretched to do their best.
- Think very carefully about how they plan for the future.
- Make some improvements so that children in Reception can make faster progress.

You can help by trying your best at all times and by keeping up your above average attendance levels.

Yours sincerely

Derek Aitken

Lead inspector

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