

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Darwen

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119667
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	379864
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mgr P. Wilkinson
Headteacher	Mrs A. O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2009
School address	Limes Avenue Darwen BB3 2SG
Telephone number	01254 706264
Fax number	01254 776896
Email address	st.josephs@blackburn.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons and saw seven teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at national assessment data and the school's assessments, school policies and governing body minutes, curriculum documentation and that related to safeguarding as well as samples of pupils' work. Also taken into account were 54 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and members of staff.

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

- Do pupils make enough progress, especially those who are more able?
- Has the school improved the quality of its teaching and the curriculum, including provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, since the previous inspection?
- Do leaders, at all levels, check the school's work rigorously, and what measures they have taken to bring about improvement?

Information about the school

Almost all pupils in this slightly smaller than average primary school are White British. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than that of similar-sized schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average.

Before- and after-school care is available on site. This is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

The school has achieved Activemark and Healthy School status.

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

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory standard of education in Years 1 to 6 and can show some improvements since the previous inspection. Some aspects of pupils' personal development are stronger than previously. They make a good contribution to school life generally, as well as to the community. They have a good understanding about healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and their attendance is above average.

Good improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that children get off to a good start. From broadly typical starting points for their age on entering Reception, they make good progress because of the well-planned activities and sometimes outstanding teaching they receive. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average and has been for some time. Mathematics improved in the most recent national tests but targets in English were missed, particularly for more-able pupils, due to a below-par performance in writing which is currently an area for improvement. Overall, pupils' progress and their achievement are satisfactory.

The school has struggled since the previous inspection to maintain stability of teaching, due largely to retirements and subsequent staff turnover. While teaching is satisfactory overall, there are inconsistencies. Despite an increase in the proportion of good lessons taught and an improving picture, changes have hampered the speed of staff development and resulted in some uneven progress by pupils through the school. Purposeful work to improve the curriculum is beginning to take effect. Topic planning is built around what pupils know about subjects and what they want to find out. There is also more focus on practising and developing skills across different subjects, but this development is at an early stage and scope remains for teachers to extend the range of pupils' writing, particularly, across the whole curriculum.

The school is working hard to improve partnership links. There is some productive work developing with local schools and businesses. While the majority of parents and carers have positive views about the school, a significant proportion have some concerns about how the school communicates with them about its progress and plans for improvement. Leaders recognise the need for clearer communications with all groups of parents and carers.

There has been determined leadership in dealing with areas of weakness and bringing stability and improvement to the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and

enables realistic and manageable future targets to be set. However, the expected outcomes for pupils in relation to those targets are not always clearly stated, making it more difficult for leaders to get a firm measure of progress made. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for the school and they are beginning to embed more effective systems and strategies for monitoring progress and raising standards. The school maintains its satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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 standards and quality in pupils' writing and thereby raise attainment in English by:
 - ensuring that satisfactory teaching becomes good
 - continuing to develop a rich and varied curriculum
 - capitalising on pupils' first-hand experience to develop writing skills across the curriculum
 - making sure that more-able pupils are always sufficiently challenged by writing tasks.
- Strengthen the school's engagement with parents and carers by more effectively communicating with them about the process of school development.
- Fully embed systems for all leaders to monitor and evaluate how well the school is improving by ensuring that expected outcomes are clearly stated, and measureable, in all development planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' learning in lessons is satisfactory. They mostly behave well and work hard on tasks which are generally matched to their abilities. There are good opportunities for pupils to work together to discuss problems. They enjoy this activity and usually find the answers they need to help their progress in the lesson. A new colour-coded marking system is popular with pupils because it gives them a clear guide to their successes and what they need to do next. They are increasingly expected to set their own targets and this also gives them a strong lead as to how they are progressing.

School assessments show that most pupils currently make expected progress from year to year. However, more-able pupils have not always made the progress they should, particularly in their writing. In response, higher targets have been set to increase the level of challenge and there is a focus on improving writing throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Adequate provision is made, and support provided, to meet their specific learning requirements. More frequent checks on the quality of provision and the outcomes are on the school's agenda. Attainment has been average at both key stages over the past four years. In 2011, performance in mathematics improved at

the end of Year 6, but English dipped. This was due largely to a lack of challenge, especially for more-able writers and too few relevant writing opportunities across the curriculum.

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are generally polite and well-mannered and usually behave sensibly around the school. They say that they feel safe. Nevertheless, behaviour is satisfactory because some pupils do not moderate their responses to others sufficiently and this occasionally disrupts learning for some pupils. They have good understanding of issues relating to healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Pupils also take on a good range of additional responsibilities such as the school council, caring roles around the school or helping in a local charity shop in order to fulfil their mission 'to serve the community'. Given their developing skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, pupils are satisfactorily prepared to move on to secondary school.

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	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are planned clearly to build on what pupils already know. Teachers' subject knowledge is sound and in most lessons electronic whiteboards are used effectively. Where teaching is good, teachers' expectations are high and pupils know what is expected of them. Interesting methods such as role play are used to successfully raise levels of interest and motivate pupils. For example, pupils became 'reporters' in one lesson and asked questions of characters in a picture in order to get ideas for their writing. Pupils are quickly engaged in practical work and have good opportunities to take charge of their own learning by working together and sharing their ideas with others. Inconsistencies occur in the lessons where children have to listen for too long, so their enthusiasm begins to wane. Conversely, there was too little input from the teacher in one lesson so pupils had too little support for their learning. Opportunities to question pupils more deeply and assess understanding are sometimes missed. Teaching assistants make an important contribution to learning when working with individuals and groups but their role during the opening parts of

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

lessons is often too passive. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory. A new marking system is helpful to pupils and some consistency in its use is evident across classes.

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily. There is appropriate emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Recent development of curriculum planning is increasingly creating more opportunities for pupils to use those skills in different way across subjects. However, there are not yet sufficient opportunities for pupils to write in different styles and for different purposes across a range of subjects. A good selection of after-school clubs helps pupils to foster their various interests outside of lesson time. Learning is also enriched by a calendar of visits and visitors to school to support both learning and pupils' personal development.

Parents and carers are almost unanimous in their agreement that their children are safe and properly cared for in school. Pupils say that they are confident of adult help when it is needed. There are good levels of pastoral care, particularly for those pupils who may be considered to be potentially the most vulnerable. The school works effectively with relevant outside agents to ensure the right kind of support for them. Attendance is closely monitored and is above average. Arrangements for children joining the school and transferring to the next are supportive. Arrangements for managing behaviour and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are satisfactory.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders actively seek further improvement. Development planning, drawn from accurate self-evaluation, gives clear direction to the school's work. Some headway has been made in dealing with issues from the previous inspection. Successful appointments and robust monitoring of lessons are beginning to strengthen teaching and learning but progress in other areas of development is not checked with the same rigour by all leaders.

The governing body attends to statutory duties efficiently. It is strongly committed to the school's future success and has a clear overview of most aspects of its work. It challenges the school's data over standards but is less rigorous in following up the outcomes for pupils resulting from its decisions in other areas of development. All essential safeguarding measures are firmly established and only a few easily rectifiable matters were brought to the school's attention. Leaders strongly oppose all forms of discrimination and strive to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. To that end there is a current focus on provision for more-able pupils and improving their performance. Links with parents and carers and other sections of the

community are satisfactory. Some developing links with other schools are good and are of benefit to pupils' learning. Leaders recognise, however, the need for more effective communication so that all groups of parents and carers are fully informed and have opportunities to contribute to the process of the school's development. The promotion of community cohesion is part of the school's action plan. Some productive links have been made with local community groups and a school with different ethnic characteristics but these do not extend beyond the locality and are a satisfactory contribution to pupils' cultural awareness.

These are the grades for the 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	3
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

Children settle quickly into Reception because excellent relationships are established as soon as they arrive. Staff and families build on these positive partnerships, for example through weekly targets which enable parents and carers to share in their children's learning. Children soon become confident and self-assured in their choices of activity and in the good friendships they form with others. Children's safety and well-being are always given high priority. Recording and evaluation of children's learning are good. Consequently, planning of next steps is well focused and leads to their good progress.

Provision is good. Teaching and learning is well balanced between adult-led activities and those which children choose for themselves. Teaching is stimulating, especially when the teacher takes on a 'ladybird' role in order to explore language that can be used when writing about mini-beasts. A good emphasis on the teaching of letters and the sounds that they make boosts children's confidence when tackling early reading and writing. While the outdoor area and newly constructed adventure play area provide good opportunities for physical development, the rest of the outdoor area is less well resourced in breadth and stimulation across other areas of learning.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led skilfully and with a strong sense of purpose. Several aspects have improved since the previous inspection. The shared ambition of the teacher and teaching assistant to strive for excellence has a very positive impact on children's learning and development.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parent and carers returned completed questionnaires. Of those, a very large majority are happy with their children’s experiences at the school. However, there were some concerns raised about the way the school supports some children’s learning and behaviour. These issues were discussed with school leaders in some detail while ensuring that parents’ and carers’ anonymity was always protected. In addition, inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school, held discussions with staff and pupils and scrutinised behavioural records. The findings are in the report.

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, Darwen 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 167 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	48	25	46	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	52	24	44	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	44	23	43	6	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	39	25	46	4	7	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	24	44	27	50	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	43	24	44	5	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	50	20	37	3	6	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)	30	56	16	30	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	41	27	50	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	28	23	43	11	20	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	35	27	50	4	7	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	44	22	41	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	50	23	43	2	4	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Darwen, BB3 2SG

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. We were pleased to find that there have been some improvements since the previous inspection. You make a good contribution to school life and know full well how to stay safe and healthy. Also, your attendance is above average and we found you to be polite and well-mannered. Those things are important, so do keep them up. Children in Reception are given a good start in their learning

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. The standards you reach in English and mathematics are average and you make satisfactory progress. We know you will want to help make St. Joseph's a better school. To make that happen we have asked adults to help you to raise standards in writing by making more lessons good, giving you better opportunities to write about what you know in different subjects and by making sure that you are always challenged as well as possible by your writing tasks. In addition, we have asked your school leaders to check more rigorously what is happening in school and how this is helping your progress. Finally, we have asked that your leaders help parents and carers understand better what the school is doing to help it to improve.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson
Lead inspector

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