

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116911
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	379326
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2012
Lead inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Burbidge
Headteacher	Clive Lambert
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed ten lessons or part lessons taught by five teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, pupils, teachers, representatives of the governing body, and a local authority adviser. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at safeguarding arrangements as well as other information, including policies, procedures, external evaluations, a range of pupils' work, and school development planning. A total of 49 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised, together with those received from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Joseph's is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British, the remainder representing a range of other ethnicities. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement is similar to that seen nationally. The school did not reach the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for academic performance, last year.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn in a class with some pupils in Year 1. There are three other mixed-age classes in the school. The school joined in a hard federation with St Mary's RC High School officially on 1 April 2012. Since September 2010, the school had already been led and managed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher of the same high school. This arrangement is continuing, with the support of two assistant headteachers from St Joseph's.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- St Joseph's is a satisfactory school. It has undergone a transformation in the last 18 months under the very skilled leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The school is not yet good, however, because there is insufficient evidence of good performance over a sustained period of time and teaching is not consistently good. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- The link to St Mary's RC High School has been of immense benefit to the school. Senior leaders manage performance exceptionally well, and middle managers, the staff and the governing body have worked wholeheartedly with them to raise achievement. Leaders at all levels are increasingly contributing to school improvement. The role of middle leaders is developing in relation to monitoring teaching and learning and leading the school when the federation headteacher and deputy headteacher are not present.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress. Although progress is often good in more formal aspects of their learning, provision does not sufficiently encourage the development of independence and enquiry skills. Almost all pupils in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory and increasingly faster progress. Consequently, after several years of underachievement, pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Many pupils achieve well in reading.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are very well motivated and have good attitudes to learning. Attendance has improved considerably since last September.
- Teaching has improved and is satisfactory. Robust monitoring has resulted in more good teaching than in the past, although not enough is consistently good

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or better. Sometimes there is insufficient reinforcement of learning for some pupils, and teachers do not always demand the best standards of pupils' presentation of their written work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that at least 80% of teaching becomes good or better in the next 12 months by:
 - teachers consistently enabling all pupils to move their learning along at the pace of which they are capable
 - teachers applying consistently high expectations for pupils' presentation and care in their work, especially through marking.

- Build upon the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that:
 - children are given more opportunities to develop independent skills of learning
 - children are able to choose from a wider number of activities for learning and play especially in the outdoor environment.

- Consolidate the improvement in the leadership and management of middle leaders by:
 - ensuring middle leaders are fully confident in managing the school on a daily basis in the absence of the federation headteacher and deputy headteacher
 - increasing further the opportunities for middle leaders to monitor teaching and learning throughout the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

After entering the school with the skills generally expected for their age, children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has been the case for some time, although this year there is evidence that children are developing some skills at a faster pace. Progress has been slow in the last few years in Years 1 and 2, with some underachievement by pupils. This inspection shows that progress has increased and pupils at the end of Year 2 are currently working at least in line with the national average, with a few reaching above average levels of attainment. Achievement and learning in Years 3 to 6 has shown much improvement this year. Almost all pupils in Year 6 are reaching at least average standards in English and mathematics, with a number reaching above average levels. The same is true of attainment compared with expectations for pupils' age in Years 3 to 5. Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs have not been left behind as in the past, and are making similar progress. The small but increasing numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. More

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focused teaching, better use of assessment and the high expectations of senior leaders have been responsible for the improvement.

The achievement of many pupils in reading is good, and following the introduction of new teaching aids has shown rapid improvement. Pupils enjoy reading and have good resources, including a new library area, created and managed by two support assistants. Pupils in all years are taught effectively, and most consolidate their letter sounds and word-building understanding on a regular basis. The school is also helping them to develop handwriting skills at an early age. Parents and carers are as one when commending the progress their children make, saying, 'We could not be happier.' They feel that the school develops communication, numeracy and literacy skills well.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching over time has been satisfactory. In keeping with the school's self-evaluation, the inspection confirms that teaching has improved and is continuing to do so. There is some good teaching in all classes. Evidence of good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage was seen in the development of children's reading skills, the assessment of their progress shown through regular tracking, and in their colourful booklets about their 'Learning Journey' during their first year. Most children make good progress in their communication and mathematical skills, but do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills by experimenting and finding things out for themselves. In Years 1 to 6, there has been much improvement in the consistency of teachers' planning which makes clear the learning objectives in lessons. Teachers make a conspicuous effort to maintain a good pace in lessons, and have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Just occasionally, some pupils who find learning more difficult struggle to keep up. Where teaching is good, teachers are thoughtful in their questioning, tailoring questions to the different abilities of individuals. This was seen very effectively in the Year 4/5/6 class, when the teacher showed great awareness of pupils' understanding of the theory of probability, and as a result encouraged good speaking and thinking.

The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is satisfactory and occasionally good. Learning is supported increasingly effectively in all years by the contributions of teaching assistants. Leaders have supported the professional development of teaching assistants and plan their deployment according to specific class needs. The planned interventions of assistants are especially helpful for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

Teachers are more confident in understanding and using the findings from regular assessment to keep a tight check on individual pupils' progress. Teachers have improved their target setting, and most pupils recall their literacy and numeracy targets quickly and accurately. Teachers' advice through marking is variable, and they sometimes do not remind pupils enough about the need to present their work tidily and legibly, and the importance of taking care with punctuation and spelling in all subjects, not just in English. Parents and carers all indicate that they feel their

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children are taught well. Almost all pupils say that teaching is good, and that teachers help them to do as well as they can.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All responses from parents and carers agreed that pupils' behaviour is good, and that their children feel safe. A typical comment is, 'All teachers have been excellent in their expectations of behaviour and learning.' Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage know exactly what is expected of them, and behave immaculately when learning formally with pupils from Year 1. However, they are directed closely in most of their activities, so are not used to making decisions about their behaviour when on their own. Behaviour in the rest of the school is consistently good. This is particularly evident when the whole school is together, for example, in playtimes in the large and stimulating school grounds and in the hall for assemblies. Behaviour in lessons, even when pupils are excited in their activities, remains calm and pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions. Pupils themselves report that a small number of other pupils, although not themselves, 'can be naughty', but all know the sanctions that are used in these cases. They talk knowledgeably about keeping safe, and the security of the school, with which they are very happy. One or two pupils report bullying of the 'falling-out' nature, but all are adamant that 'no-one hurts anyone here', and that there is no cyber-bullying, where they understand the dangers. Older pupils especially, thrive on responsibilities, often being entrusted with setting up and looking after valuable resources. The school has effective links with outside agencies which helps meet the needs of those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable or potentially disruptive.

Attendance is average, and has improved considerably this year after some years when it was below average. The school has done particularly well in raising the attendance of previously poor attenders to almost 100%.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have brought high quality leadership and management to the school, and have made a significant difference to its performance, pupils' achievement, teachers' skills and the capacity for sustained improvement. After an initial audit of the school's priorities, and their own familiarisation with primary education, they have led an increasingly accelerated improvement in many areas of the school. Senior leaders have been especially effective in guiding and supporting improvements in teaching. They instigated an ongoing extensive programme of monitoring, resulting in clear guidelines to teachers. Significantly, this included more opportunities for professional development and the raising of staff morale. This has generated a strong team spirit and a shared determination to improve the quality of education. Teachers have eagerly accepted responsibility to improve their practice and a major benefit has been the rapid development of the skills of middle managers. Assistant headteachers and subject leaders have accepted wider responsibilities: their consequent accountability, combined with enthusiasm and skill, mean that they are working effectively with the

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same ambitions to raise performance. Leaders accept that the sharing of leadership responsibilities still requires further work in order for continuous improvement and development of high-order management skills. For example, middle managers are not yet fully confident in monitoring teaching and learning or in leading the school in the absence of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

The school has enhanced the opportunities for pupils to enjoy a more creative and thematic curriculum. Of great benefit are the regular visits for older pupils to the high school for tuition. Teachers from the high school are also welcomed to St Joseph's by pupils who enjoy opportunities to learn with subject specialists. This has been especially beneficial for more-able and gifted and talented pupils. The wider curriculum enables the school to add positively to the already sensitive provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This was epitomised by an assembly led by the headteacher, with excellent singing by the whole school, accompanied by pupil musicians. The school is fully inclusive, with no evidence of discrimination, and leaders and staff have improved the promotion of equal opportunities with the elimination of most underachievement.

The governing body has come a long way in two years, after recognising that it was failing to tackle underperformance. It is led by a determined and experienced chair, who with other members, shares senior leaders' determination to bring about continuous improvement. The governing body meets its safeguarding duties effectively, and is working well to form a single governing body for the two federated schools. There is excellent engagement with parents and carers, who are active partners in the life of the school. All would recommend the school to other prospective parents, and many express strong support for the links with the high school.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



17 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5AW

May I thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your school recently. It was good to see how much you enjoy school and especially how well behaved you are. Your new hall is marvellous, and was equalled by your amazing singing in the assembly I visited. You go to a satisfactory school where you are reaching the standards expected of you for your age. Very importantly though, the school is showing many signs of improvement. Your work has got much better, which is due to the fact that you are so keen to learn and that your teachers have also improved. This is partly because, as you were proud to tell me, you now often work with children and teachers from St Mary's RC High School. Also, you are very lucky to have the high school headteacher and deputy headteacher now managing your school so well, with good help from the rest of your school leaders. All the staff make sure that you are safe and well cared for. Your parents and carers are very pleased with the way the school is providing for your education, and have shown this by helping you to attend school more often than in the past.

I have suggested to the school's leaders some ways in which the school can improve even more. Although you have some good teaching now, I would like you to have good or better teaching all the time. I have asked teachers to make sure that the work you do in your books is the best you can do and that you always take care and present it neatly. I have asked that children in Reception have more chances to make choices, and that includes working and playing outdoors. Finally, I have asked that those teachers who are leaders in your school develop their confidence in managing the school on their own, especially if the headteacher and his deputy both have to be at St Mary's. Your school is improving quickly, and I hope you will all do your best to make sure that it continues to get better by always working hard, because that means you will be doing well.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite
Lead inspector

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