

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123846
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380747
Inspection dates	June 2012
Lead inspector	Jane Burchall HMI

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	
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Scott
Headteachers	Paul Harper and Richard Simmonds
Date of previous school inspection	March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jane Burchall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Neil Gillespie

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed a total of sixteen lessons led by eight different teachers and one teaching assistant. They held meetings with pupils, members of the governing body, staff, the local authority and parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and observed the school's work. They looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, planning of individual lessons and the school's data on its performance. They also analysed questionnaires returned by 117 parents and carers, 120 pupils and 19 staff.

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a slightly smaller-than-average sized school. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds, with a small but increasing proportion from a range of minority ethnic groups including some pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found nationally in schools. The school supports 16 pupils either at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs; this number is in line with that seen nationally. The range of special educational needs include behavioural difficulties; speech, language and communication needs; hearing impairment; autism; and moderate and specific learning difficulties. The school has achieved the Health Promoting School award and has its own forest school on site. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum standards expected by the government. A breakfast club and after-school club are provided for pupils who attend the school.

Since the previous inspection there have been changes to the leadership and management of the school. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, an executive headteacher and an acting headteacher were appointed on a temporary basis in December 2010. The school is currently recruiting a permanent headteacher.

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

- This is a good school where all staff work well together and show very strong commitment to ensuring teaching and learning are consistently good across the school. This is not yet an outstanding school because, although improvements in the quality of teaching now secure pupils' better progress, some inconsistencies remain in the quality of marking and target setting. Pupils achieve well because teaching across the school is good. In lessons observed, the vast majority of pupils were engaged in their learning, were clear about what they were learning and made good progress.
- Strong provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that pupils get off to a good start to school life. During their time in school, they enjoy their learning and achieve well so that by the end of Key Stage 2 they have reached standards which are above those seen nationally in reading and mathematics. A focus by the school on improving pupils' skills in writing has seen standards in this area rise significantly so that they are now in line with national expectations.
- Pupils' good behaviour contributes much to the positive environment for learning in lessons. Relationships between pupils and with adults are strong. Pupils confirm that they feel safe whilst in school.
- The care, guidance and support received by pupils are strengths of the school. The forest school has been particularly successful in engaging a range of pupils in school life and has contributed to improved attitudes to learning in the classroom.
- The senior leadership team has given a firm lead to improving the quality of teaching through the management of performance. Systems for monitoring the progress of individual pupils and for holding staff to account for that progress are now well developed. A wide range of monitoring activities, undertaken by senior and middle leaders, identifies accurately where provision could be better. This includes further development of the recently introduced creative curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of progress made by all pupils still further by:
 - ensuring pupils regularly apply their individual targets to all the work they undertake
 - ensuring that marking across the school provides pupils with regular feedback on how they can improve their work.
- Develop the creative curriculum further to ensure all subjects areas are covered in sufficient depth.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In the majority of lessons observed pupils made good progress because they are actively involved in their learning. For example, they regularly talk to a partner about what they are learning and exchange ideas in order to develop their understanding. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills expected for their age. They work well together, for example two created paper chains to help solve a simple addition problem. Children share their findings with their classmates, some of whom are able to offer more sophisticated strategies and extend learning still further. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree that their children make good progress.

A concerted effort by staff and senior leaders on improving pupils' progress and attainment has seen standards across the school rise steadily over the past two years, so that by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils now reach standards which are above average overall. School data, observations in lessons and work seen in books indicate that the school's view that standards are continuing to rise are well founded. Standards in reading and mathematics are above average at the end of both Key Stage 1 and 2. The school has seen pupils' attainment in writing, a historically weaker area, improve significantly due to the effective and consistent implementation of strategies aimed at improving the quality of their writing. The work of pupils across the school confirms that they are making good progress in learning to write in a range of different styles and formats. For example, in Year 6, writing is increasingly well structured into paragraphs, and uses some sophisticated vocabulary and more complex sentences to develop ideas and correct punctuation.

Good provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational means that this group of pupils also make good progress. Pupils from multi-ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make similar good progress and often achieve standards which are better than their peers.

Quality of teaching

Since the last inspection the school has secured a rapid improvement in the quality of teaching overall. Most parents and carers feel that teaching is good, and inspectors found this to be the case in the vast majority of lessons observed.

Teaching is most effective when teachers inspire pupils to produce their best work and when teachers give pupils clear guidance on how they can improve. The school has worked hard to support pupils to become independent learners and has had some success. Across the school teachers make good use of opportunities for pupils to talk to each other about their work, engaging them in meaningful learning activities. Leaders have implemented a whole-school marking policy to improve the level of feedback given to pupils. Where marking is effective pupils respond well and use the feedback given to support their progress. Teachers have introduced individual targets so that pupils know what next steps they need to take in their learning. However, these strategies are not yet fully embedded across the school as some pupils are not always sufficiently applying their targets to their work or being provided with regular enough feedback through marking.

For the most part, teachers question pupils well to extend their learning, to encourage pupils to think for themselves and to draw effectively upon the knowledge and understanding of the whole class. When this happens, progress is most rapid as learning is securely built upon what pupils already know and can do. Teaching makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in supporting pupils to work together. The recently introduced creative approach to curriculum development is also having a positive impact upon pupils' progress. Pupils are provided with more opportunities for interactive learning, particularly in the on-site forest school.

The regular monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress, including that of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, lead to effective adaptation of the curriculum so that individual needs are well met. Lesson planning is effective in informing teaching assistants of their roles and responsibilities; they are deployed well across the classroom to ensure they effectively support individual pupils' particular needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and overall they behave well in lessons and around the school. Most parents and carers feel that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school, and inspectors confirm this view. From very early in school life, pupils show the ability to work well together, cooperating well to meet common goals. They show respect and empathy for each other. The forest school provision has been particularly successful in supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being and in teaching pupils to work as part of an effective team. Pupils are aware of expectations and respond immediately to staff's requests. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and a growing maturity which enables them to regulate their own behaviour and contributes well to their ability to keep themselves safe. Pupils say they feel safe in school and their parents agree. They attend well and are punctual. A very small number of parents and carers raised concerns about bullying in the school. Pupils report that instances of bullying are rare and they express confidence that should concerns arise they can turn to an adult for support.

Leadership and management

The current leadership team has responded effectively in addressing several major issues identified at the last inspection; this includes improving the consistency of the quality of teaching across the school and the rate at which pupils progress. The team communicates high expectations and an ambitious vision for school improvement and has successfully engaged the whole staff team in a programme of ongoing improvement. The effective implementation of a range of systems means that teaching and learning are more closely monitored. A programme of training and mentoring has seen improvements in teaching so that the vast majority is now good. Data regarding pupils' progress and achievements are rigorously and regularly analysed so that those at risk of underachievement are quickly identified and supported to make improved progress. Pupils are now more appropriately challenged and engaged in their learning and, as a result, teachers report that behaviour across the school has improved. Systems ensure that pupils are appropriately safeguarded.

Senior leaders, the governing body and the staff team undertake a cycle of self-evaluation and have a clear understanding of what the school does well and where they need to improve. This feeds effectively into a development plan which focuses on the most relevant areas of school development. Leaders and staff make good use of outside support to ensure improvement is driven at a sufficiently rapid rate. Much work has been undertaken to develop management capacity across the school. The senior leadership team now successfully delegates responsibilities to subject and phase leaders who accurately identify how to develop their areas of responsibility. This effective distribution of roles has had a direct impact upon improvements made to date and illustrates the school's good capacity to improve further. The school endeavours to work closely with parents and carers; the high level of return of parental questionnaires is testament to their success. A number of strategies have been adopted to keep parents and carers informed and to include them in their child's education. Leaders work to ensure that equal opportunities are well promoted and that any form of discrimination is tackled. The school has recently introduced a creative approach to delivering the curriculum which is good overall. Key skills are successfully delivered across the curriculum and pupils' spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development is good. On-going evaluation of the curriculum by leaders has identified that some subject areas, such as the arts, are less well promoted.

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.



15 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Bridgwater, TA6 7EE

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting some of you, hearing some of you read, and seeing you in your lessons. We think that you go to a good school which is doing a good job at helping you to learn.

Here are the things that we think your school does well.

- All of the staff really care about you and look after you well.
- Your teachers provide you with some interesting things to do, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which means you enjoy your learning. You really enjoy and get lots of opportunities to learn outdoors, for example when you spend time in the forest school.
- You all behave well and work hard so that you make good progress, especially with your English and mathematics.

The headteachers and all of the staff really want to make your school the best. To help them to do this, we have asked them to:

- help you all to make even better progress by helping you to use your literacy and numeracy targets in all your work and by regularly telling you what you can do to improve your work
- make sure that they give you more opportunities to learn about different subjects such as art.

You can all help them by remembering to always use your targets to improve your work and by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Jane Burchall
Her Majesty's Inspector

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