



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103842
LEA Dudley
Inspection number 277009
Inspection dates 22 September 2005 to 23 September 2005
Reporting inspector Tom Shine RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hillcrest Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Dudley
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		West Midlands DY2 7PW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01384 818925
Number on roll	259	Fax number	01384 818930
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr Dennis Cody

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is an average size primary school in an area with high levels of social deprivation. About 60% of pupils are local, but many travel from further afield. The majority of its pupils are White British, but just under a quarter are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly below average, and around the same proportion is entitled to free school meals. When they start in the nursery, children's skills are much less well developed than is usual for their age.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's view that this is an effective school that gives good value for money. The quality of education is good. As a result, the pupils achieve well and attain standards that are broadly at the expected level for their age when they leave. All pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science and in their personal development and well-being.

There are good levels of care and support for pupils in a safe, welcoming environment. There are generally good systems to check how well pupils are progressing, but some teachers' marking does not tell their pupils how to improve their work. The curriculum is strong in literacy, numeracy and science but, apart from religious education, insufficient time is left for teaching some of the other subjects. For example, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their skills systematically in art and design or music. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English are supported well and make good progress.

Teaching is good in the nursery and reception classes. Children make a flying start to their education because of the richness and variety of this provision.

The headteacher leads the school well and has successfully addressed the weaknesses noted in the last report. He and his senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and as a result know what needs to be done to move the school forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to develop and practise their skills in art and design and music.
- Ensure all teachers' marking shows pupils more clearly how to improve their work and to achieve the targets in their books.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the nursery with much weaker skills than normally expected for those of their age. However, they make good progress so that, by the time they leave Year 6, they are achieving the standards expected of them in English, mathematics and science. These standards are reflected in the most recent published test results.

Children have particularly low skills in forming relationships, language and counting when they enter the school. The highly effective provision in the Foundation Stage enables most children to make good progress in catching up. Disruption in staffing and a low starting point led to standards in Year 2 in 2004 being below those expected and below those attained in 2003, although provisional results in 2005 show an improvement.

In Year 6, standards have been rising steadily over the last four years and pupils have been achieving well, achieving average standards in English, mathematics and science

in 2004. Provisional test results for 2005 show lower standards. This was anticipated because these pupils entered Year 3 with below average attainment. Effective support given to pupils with learning and behavioural needs has enabled them to make good progress and achieve their targets. Standards in the current Year 6 have returned to the expected levels and are reflected in pupils' realistic but challenging end-of-year targets. The school's continuing focus on writing is bearing fruit and helping to raise standards. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) across the school have improved since the last inspection and are now broadly at the levels expected for pupils' ages. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their education and attend school regularly. In recent years, there has been a steady rise in their attendance which is now in line with the national average. Their attitudes are good. They listen carefully, answer thoughtfully and tackle their work with enthusiasm. Their behaviour is good in lessons, in the dining area and at playtime. There is very little bullying and pupils say they feel safe. They are confident in the support of staff should any problems arise.

Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. They readily explain what constitutes a healthy diet and recognise the importance of physical activity. Pupils greatly value the activities provided during lessons and after school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Good opportunities are planned to develop pupils' spiritual development through good sensitive assemblies. Their awareness of other races and cultures is now successfully developed through planned topics across the curriculum. Pupils relate well to each other and to members of staff and have a clear understanding of right and wrong.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community. They are responsive to the needs of others and willingly set about raising funds for charities. Responsibilities are taken on readily and conscientiously. The members of the school council, for example, take their responsibilities very seriously. It is a very active group that has helped to bring about improvements such as healthy snacks and interesting activities at playtime. Pupils' good progress in literacy, numeracy, science and ICT prepares them well for the next stage of school and for older life. Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. This consistently good teaching accounts for pupils' good progress and achievement by the time they leave the school.

Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects that they use skilfully, especially when teaching literacy and numeracy. In a literacy lesson in Year 6, for example, the pupils understood very well what they had to do to compose a good ending to their story. This was because they were fully engaged in the lesson as a result of their teacher's clear guidance, her high expectations and her insistence on building on skills they had already learned. The teacher used good questioning to test her pupils' understanding as the lesson progressed. These qualities were present in most lessons seen throughout the school.

Teachers know their pupils well and have good systems for monitoring how well pupils are learning. These provide secure information to use when setting goals for individuals. Teachers, therefore, are able to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those new to learning English are given work matched well to their needs, enabling them to make good progress. The generous number of teaching assistants is used effectively to ensure pupils receive good support in learning.

Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is consistently good with every effort being made to prepare children for the next stage of their education. Staff are clearly passionate about their work and relate well to the children who get off to a cracking start as a result.

While teachers' marking is very encouraging some of it does not explain clearly what pupils should do to improve their work or to achieve the targets in their books.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school offers pupils opportunities to experience a wide range of work, with the emphasis on improving their skills in English, mathematics and science. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards and use the computer suite to teach keyboard skills and to enable pupils to do research. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is rich and stimulating. Children new to the nursery settle in well and enjoy the tasks they are given.

The school judges the curriculum to be good whereas inspectors judge it to be satisfactory. This is because, although all subjects are taught, they do not cover all that is required in enough detail. In music and art and design, for example, pupils are given too little time to develop and practise their skills regularly. The pupils take part in a good range of activities outside school although these are largely restricted to sporting activities.

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care provided by the school is good and this contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school and their good progress. Child protection procedures are good. Staff are

alert to any signs that pupils might be distressed or anxious. The very few incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively.

The good relationships between adults and pupils help pupils feel safe and secure. Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils well in class. Good personal support and guidance are provided for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities. These pupils have clear targets in their education plans that enable them to make good progress. The teacher responsible for managing the coordination of this provision has good knowledge about the progress they make, how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve further.

The school emphasises health education well and focuses on the 'Healthy Eating' initiative, offering a breakfast club that provides a healthy start to the day.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher shares his good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses with senior staff. Together they manage the school effectively. They have united the school with a common purpose – to raise standards further – and are focused on ensuring that all groups of pupils make good progress.

Subject managers for English, mathematics and science lead their areas of responsibility well. They have high expectations, are knowledgeable and are committed to ensuring all groups of pupils achieve well. Provision for pupils with learning disabilities ensures that these pupils achieve as well as they can and reach their targets. As a result, many pupils achieve well enough to be taken off the register of pupils needing support. The management of other subjects is not as strongly developed.

In its analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, the school takes full account of the views of pupils, staff and parents, and focuses on meeting pupils' academic and personal needs. To this end, it has good systems to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils, analysing data diligently to identify where support should be targeted.

The school improvement plan contains relevant priorities that are focused on continuous development, including a strong emphasis on improving writing which has led to higher writing standards. Governance is good. The governors work well together. They are very supportive of the school and allocate financial resources effectively to implement priorities identified in the school's plans for improvement. They ensure the school fulfils all statutory responsibilities.

Grade: 2

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28th September 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for all the help you gave to the inspectors when they came to your school a few weeks ago. We liked being in the school and talking to you and your teachers and coming to your assembly. We know that you will be interested in what we thought about your school.

These are the things we liked most about your school.

When you first come to school in the nursery and reception you make a very good start to your education and do very well.

You do very well in subjects such as English, mathematics and science because you have good teachers.

Your headteacher runs the school very well and makes sure those of you who need extra help get it.

You enjoy school and are enthusiastic when doing activities, including sporting activities that take place outside the school day.

You are taught to realise the importance of eating healthily.

You told us you feel safe and well supported.

But to make things even better we have suggested a few things we think will help.

We think you could be given more time to learn and practise your skills in art and design and music.

We also think it would help when your teachers mark your work if they told you what you need to do to improve it.

Yours sincerely

Tom Shine

Lead inspector