



St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103849
LEA Dudley
Inspection number 277011
Inspection dates 20 October 2005 to 21 October 2005
Reporting inspector Graham Sims RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lea Vale Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Norton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 2DT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01384 818325
Number on roll	236	Fax number	01384 818328
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Reverend David McGough
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Brenda Beale

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	20 October 2005 - 21 October 2005	277011

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is an average-sized voluntary aided Catholic primary school, which draws its pupils from the whole of Stourbridge. The great majority of pupils are from a White British background. Children are admitted to the reception class either in September or in January, most having attended the school's own pre-school. Their attainment when they start school is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is just below the national average. The school's staffing situation is very stable, and there have been no major changes since the previous inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Joseph's RC Primary School is a good school with some outstanding features. The school provides good value for money. The school's judgements on its effectiveness concur with those of the inspection team.

Pupils achieve well. They receive an excellent start to their education in the reception class, and many children are already working well above the level expected for their age by the time they start Year 1. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6 because the school provides a good curriculum and good quality teaching. Standards in writing are above those found in many primary schools, but are not as high as those achieved in reading, mathematics and science. Overall, however, standards are generally well above average by the end of Year 6.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and reflects the excellent standard of care provided by the staff. This is a school that puts its stated Christian aims into practice, resulting in an extremely friendly, very caring and truly supportive atmosphere, in which each individual is highly valued. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very positive. Staff know their pupils very well, but systems to keep track of their progress and inform them of how well they are doing require further development.

Leadership and management are good. Supportive and knowledgeable governors, dedicated and hardworking staff, and an astute headteacher all fulfil their various roles of responsibility well. There is a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, effective action is taken to bring improvement, and high standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standard of pupils' writing and make better use of opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.
- Enhance the systems for keeping track of pupils' progress so that staff have a more precise understanding of how well pupils are doing in terms of National Curriculum levels and pupils have a clearer view of what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school has maintained high standards since the previous inspection and pupils achieve well throughout the school. Children make excellent progress in the reception class, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they start Year 1, nearly all children have reached, and many have progressed beyond, the standards expected for their age in all areas of learning.

Over the last few years, standards have generally been well above average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils are currently making good progress in every class. The school sets itself challenging targets and is normally successful in meeting them. Whilst they are better than in many primary schools, standards in writing are not as high as in reading, mathematics and science.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make excellent progress because of the high quality support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. More able pupils are also given every opportunity to succeed, as indicated by the very significant proportion of pupils who exceed the nationally expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. It is heavily influenced by the school's Christian Catholic aims and reflects the very high standard of care provided by the staff. Pupils' work, particularly that produced in religious education and personal, social and health education, displays a keen spiritual and cultural understanding. Their very good behaviour, politeness and obvious care and concern indicate very good moral and social development. Pupils feel confident, happy and safe, and are adamant that bullying does not exist in their school.

The level of attendance is above average, most absence occurring because some parents take their children on holiday during term-time. Pupils enjoy their work and the extracurricular activities which the school provides. They have a well developed understanding of a healthy lifestyle and safe practices. They are helpful within the classroom and around the school and show concern for others in the wider community. The school is particularly good at helping pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem which, along with their good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, equips them well for the future. The school could, however, provide more opportunities for pupils to use their own initiative and become more independent as learners.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, and there is some outstanding teaching. In the Foundation Stage, the teaching is exemplary. The children learn in a very exciting environment through a variety of exceptionally well planned and diverse experiences which enable them to make excellent progress.

In Years 1 to 6, the teaching is thorough, constructive and engaging. Well-planned, stimulating activities provide challenges which are well matched to pupils' differing abilities. As a result, pupils enjoy their work and achieve well.

Stimulating and extremely attractive displays provide eloquent testimony to pupils' learning in a range of subjects, as did an outstanding assembly taken by pupils in Year 1 during the inspection. These young pupils acted, recited, sang and played with great confidence in front of the whole school and many parents, showing just how much they had learnt in the previous weeks about their senses.

The quality of some of the teachers' marking of pupils' English work is very good; it gives pupils a clear idea of what they have done well and what they must do to improve. However, teachers do not apply the same rigour to the marking of pupils' written work in other subjects, thereby missing opportunities to help pupils develop the quality of their writing. Although teachers know their pupils very well, they do not have a systematic process for keeping track of their progress in terms of National Curriculum levels and, therefore, lack a helpful tool to identify how they might help pupils to improve even further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, well-planned and balanced curriculum, which fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum. Particularly good attention is given to meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities by offering them specialised learning programmes. The school also offers a good range of additional activities, such as choir, Irish dancing, football and French, which really help the pupils to enjoy being at school and to learn more. Very good attention is given to helping pupils to develop a healthy lifestyle, for example, through morning exercises in which all pupils and staff participate with great enjoyment. The programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship, which is taught through the scheme of work for religious education, is a particular strength of the curriculum.

It has a significant impact on pupils' personal development and contributes greatly to the very friendly, extremely caring and celebratory ethos of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of support and care provided for the pupils is outstanding. It is firmly rooted in the school's very strong spiritual aims, which find their practical outworking in first-class pastoral care, meaningful worship, and a community which is highly sensitive to the needs of others. Excellent relationships with the staff and occasions such as the weekly Praise Assembly help to build pupils' social skills and self-esteem and to achieve well.

Excellent attention is given to pupils' health and safety. Child protection procedures are secure. Vulnerable pupils and those who have learning difficulties and disabilities are identified quickly and supported carefully, enabling them to gain in confidence and make good progress in their learning. This is a school in which staff know every pupil very well, really care and help everyone to fulfil their true potential.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher provides strong, astute leadership, which has enabled the school to maintain high standards and introduce a range of new initiatives since the previous inspection. She has created a united and highly effective team of staff, who work together harmoniously and with a common sense of purpose to create a wonderful ethos within the school which is greatly valued by pupils and parents. Leadership and management responsibilities are delegated effectively and undertaken well. Governors are knowledgeable, supportive and involved, and undertake their statutory responsibilities well.

The school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate, and staff have a clear understanding of what needs to be improved. All staff, for example, have been involved in devising ways to help develop the quality of pupils' non-fiction writing and are working towards improvement. There is a very strong sense of community, with pupils benefiting from the involvement of parents and the local church. The latest school development plan has been drawn up after a day's consultation with staff, governors and a representative group of parents, giving ownership of the school's future direction to a wide range of stakeholders.

With the very good teamwork of the staff, the school's past track record, and the very capable leadership of the headteacher and governors, the school is in a good position to improve further.

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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	1	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	2	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	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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	1	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	1	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

St Joseph's RC Primary School Lea Vale Road Norton Stourbridge West Midlands DY8 2DT

26 October 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We really liked your school and enjoyed meeting you and talking to you and your teachers.

We particularly liked the way everybody works together to make the school such a good place to be in. Your teachers work very hard to provide good teaching and many interesting activities, and to make the school look so attractive with their excellent displays of your work. We thought the Year 1 assembly which we attended was outstanding. It showed us how much you enjoy learning, how well you are developing into confident young people, and how well behaved you are. It was also good to see so many of your parents there too, as it shows they care very much about your education. We are pleased to see that the school is helping you to develop healthy lifestyles, for example, through your morning exercise sessions.

Since the school's previous inspection, your headteacher and the staff have worked hard to help you maintain high standards in your work. We found no major areas for improvement, but have suggested two key things your teachers could do to make the school even better than it is. We have suggested that teachers keep a more careful track of the progress you are making and let you know what National Curriculum level you are working at. This should help them to identify what you need to work on to do even better. We have asked them to look more carefully at your writing in subjects like history, science and religious education, as this should help you to improve the quality of your non-fiction writing and to do better in your tests at the end of Year 6. We would also like them to give you more opportunity to use your own initiative and to try things out for yourselves.

We hope that you will continue to work with your teachers to make the school an even better place in which to learn skills that will help you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Graham Sims (Lead inspector)