



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106348
LEA Trafford
Inspection number 277535
Inspection dates 11 May 2006 to 11 May 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Susan Barkway HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Marlborough Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Sale
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Cheshire M33 3AF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 973 4938
Number on roll	348	Fax number	0161 973 7028
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Gilbert Cain
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs B Harrold

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Her Majesty's Inspectors. In the course of the day visit, the inspector met with a range of staff and pupils and observed the school at work. Paired observations of several lessons were conducted with the headteacher. The school's self-evaluation document provided evidence in shaping the inspector's judgements and helped to focus the inspection. Discussions with the school's link adviser, governors, parents and the receipt of 174 questionnaires from parents further assisted the writing of this report.

Description of the school

St Joseph's RC Primary School is a two-form entry primary school set in an estate of private housing in Sale. The school is popular and oversubscribed. The pupils are mainly from socially advantaged backgrounds, with a small minority coming from low income families. The population is settled and, as a result, the school has low pupil mobility. There are only three pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are 37 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, including two pupils on school action plus. This represents a low percentage in relation to national figures. There are no pupils with a statement for special educational needs.

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 provides a happy and welcoming learning environment. Pupils enjoy coming to the school and feel safe when they are there. As one pupil said, 'I know when I am at school I am protected because, as long as you only go where you are allowed, adults are watching you all the time.' Parents agree that the school does everything possible to 'make learning fun' and, as a result, their children are happy to go to school. A group of parents stressed the strong community ethos that was a feature of the school, saying that they felt part of a big, happy family. One parent expressed the view that there is 'something special about St Joseph's' and others added that this is because the school treats each child as an individual, not as a cohort.

Pupils achieve well at the school. They are eager to learn and, because most lessons are interesting and challenging, they reach high standards. In the Foundation Stage, the children settle quickly and make good progress, most achieving or exceeding the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave to join Key Stage 1. They continue to make good progress through Key Stage 1 and make very good progress through Key Stage 2. However, the school is aware that there are some pockets of underachievement. For example, boys in Key Stage 1 do not achieve as well as the girls and, although they 'catch up' in most subject areas in Key Stage 2, a significantly smaller percentage of boys achieve the higher levels in English. The school has taken action to improve the situation. The evidence suggests that the action has improved pupils' attitude to reading, particularly that of boys. However, it is too early to say whether the measures will be effective in improving standards and achievement still further.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are kind to each other, well mannered and courteous to adults. They listen to their teachers and follow instructions but they are lively and respond well in practical and investigative situations. What is impressive about the pupils is the way in which they are developing a very mature approach to life. They welcome the opportunity to express their views and they do this politely but with the assurance that they will be listened to. They understand, however, that not all of their requests will be met and appreciate the reasons for this. For example, they are able to explain why their request for a swimming pool in the school playground was not such a good idea! They are beginning to make a very positive contribution to the community, as shown by their contribution to the school council, their active part in parish masses and numerous fundraising activities. All of these are helping them to develop as confident individuals with a strong sense of what is right and wrong.

Pupils are able to achieve well because of the outstanding support and care they receive from the staff in the school and the clear expectations set for them. Teachers plan thoroughly and take care to ensure that lessons are interesting, with a good range of activities planned to meet the needs of all learners in their class. They have very good relationships with the pupils, often using humour and taking full advantage of opportunities to make learning fun. Most of the teaching is at least good and some is outstanding because of the way it builds on pupils' previous learning, the high expectations set by the teacher, the frequent reinforcement of learning points and

the celebration of achievement. The school now needs to ensure that all teachers have similarly high expectations for pupils' achievement.

The school is working hard to provide a rich and varied curriculum for the pupils. It has gone a long way to achieving this but is right in agreeing the need for further developments to the curriculum, particularly in music and art, as a priority. However, they have a strong base on which to build. Curriculum coordinators provide very good, subject specialist support to staff with the result that all curriculum areas are well planned and resourced. In particular, provision and standards in information and communication technology have improved considerably since the last inspection and much has been done to broaden the curriculum. For example, French is taught in most classes and there are plans to extend this provision for all pupils.

Although the headteacher has only been in post for two terms, she is providing excellent leadership, making her own mark but also building on the good foundations left by the previous headteacher. The governors expressed the view that 'the passion she has for the welfare of the children permeates down to the whole school community'. The headteacher is extremely well supported by both members of her senior management team. Their commitment to the school shines through and they are very effective in working with the headteacher to achieve school improvement. Governors are very effective in providing support and challenge as appropriate. The school provides good value for money and, as a result of the high quality leadership in place, it has excellent capacity to improve still further. However, the leadership team should give further consideration to how it will demonstrate the impact on learning of school improvement activities.

St Joseph's is a good school with many outstanding features. It is a school where pupils, parents, staff and governors contribute equally to its success and of which everyone feels proud to be a part.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with above average levels of ability. They make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage and the school continues to improve on existing good practice by raising levels of expectations still further. Pupils overall make good progress throughout Key Stage 1 and very good progress through Key Stage 2. Standards at both key stages are above the national average. However, at Key Stage 1, boys do not achieve as well as girls and there was a significant drop in the number of pupils achieving Level 2 in writing last year. Additionally, at Key Stage 2, a significantly higher number of girls (64.7%) than boys (33.3%) achieve Level 5 in English. The school has identified these as areas for development and has taken action to improve the situation.

In other curriculum areas, the evidence obtained from lesson observations and samples of pupils' work indicate that high standards are reached and pupils make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are articulate and communicate well with teachers, visitors and each other. At 96.8%, the levels of attendance are well above the national average.

The pupils are developing a very good understanding of what they need to do to stay safe and healthy. They enjoy the variety of sporting activities offered, including the 'wake up, shake up exercises' at the beginning of each day. It was a pleasure to see all of the juniors having so much fun dancing to 'Is this the way to Amarillo!' They appreciate the fruit provided, even if they do want Friday as a fruit free and treat day!

St Joseph's has a very strong Christian ethos. As a result, pupils' spiritual and moral development is excellent. Parents speak highly of the caring, family atmosphere in the school, the strong church links and the belief in social care which the school helps to instil in their children.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

During paired observations of lessons between the inspector and headteacher, a range of strengths and areas for development were seen and agreed. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and behaviour in all lessons was excellent. All lessons were well planned and organised and great care was taken by the teachers to ensure that the activities were appropriate for all learners in the class. There were good opportunities for encouraging independent learning, creativity and investigative approaches. The school uses assessment information well to monitor pupils' progress and to plan for future learning. However, the school has identified the need to ensure that all teachers have high expectations for pupils' achievement as an area for development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned to ensure that it covers all areas of the National Curriculum and the Every Child Matters agenda. It is enriched through a programme of visitors to the school, out of school activities and school visits. The ability to cover all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum to a high standard has recently been enhanced by the provision of an outdoor play area for the Reception children. Although there is a wide range of learning opportunities offered to the pupils, the school has identified art and music as areas for further development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for the pupils.

Parents report that teachers are approachable and keep them well informed of any problems. They are very positive about the way the school responds to particular concerns, for example, by taking security measures to ensure the safety of pupils and being sensitive to the needs of pupils with food allergies.

The school provides a good programme of health education as well as very good opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Vulnerable pupils are supported well through careful monitoring, working closely with parents and bringing in external specialists when appropriate. Rigorous assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are in place, including for non-core subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior management team and governors are providing very good strategic direction to the school. The priorities for improvement are clearly identified and the school improvement plan provides a firm foundation for ensuring that action is taken to address the priorities. However, more consideration now needs to be given to the expected outcomes from actions and how the impact on learning will be identified and measured.

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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?	1	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	1	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	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	1	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	1	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

Thank you for helping me during my recent inspection of your school. I very much enjoyed meeting and talking with you. I was pleased to know that you enjoy school and to hear that your parents thought that St Joseph's was a good school.

What I liked about your school:

- most of you make very good progress with your work and it is of a high standard
- your behaviour is excellent and you work hard
- you are very polite and you try to help other people
- the teachers in the school encourage you to make suggestions about how your school can be improved and they listen to your views
- your teachers and headteacher work hard to make sure that there are lots of interesting things for you to do when you are at school.

What your school should do to be even better:

- make sure that the boys' work, particularly in English, is as good as the girls'
- make sure that work is hard enough for you in all of your lessons.

I hope that you continue to be a happy school.