



St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116911
LEA Herefordshire
Inspection number 279943
Inspection dates 14 March 2006 to 14 March 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Cole AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Ross-on-Wye
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Herefordshire HR9 5AW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01989 564655
Number on roll	126	Fax number	01989 565841
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bill Harris
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Miss Maria Bord

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school, which is smaller than average, serves pupils from the town of Rosson- Wye and from a wide rural area around the town. The great majority of pupils are White British. Parents' social and economic circumstances vary widely but are broadly average overall. Pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school also vary and the overall picture differs from year to year; the most recent evidence is that pupils start with broadly average attainment. There has been much recent change in the staffing of the school at all levels. At the time of the inspection, four of the five classes were taught by teachers new to the school during the last two and a half years. The headteacher was appointed just over a year before this inspection, and her deputy six months ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school's provision is satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory value for money. This is also the school's view. All main areas of the school's work are satisfactory. This includes the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage, the teaching and curriculum, the personal development of pupils and the leadership and management. There are some good features and no significant weaknesses. Pupils' spiritual development is very good and their moral and social development are good. Pupils behave well, enjoy school, attend well and, like their parents, they have a good opinion of the school. Pupils have sound qualities of independence and responsibility but are given too little help to use and further develop them. The school has improved satisfactorily since the previous inspection. An unfortunate setback, however, has been the school's recent loss of permanent access to the hall in a neighbouring building which it has used for many years for physical education, assemblies and musical and dramatic events. Over the last year, there has been substantial improvement in many aspects of the school since the establishment of a settled staff and the good leadership of the new headteacher. Because many developments and many staff are new, several changes are not yet fully or consistently implemented. This applies to some aspects of teaching and to procedures for keeping a check on teaching and learning. The school has a clear understanding of its own performance, is fully committed to improvement and plans well to make it happen. This gives the school a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve all staff in more extensive checks on teaching and learning to spread good practice, ensure consistency and increase pupils' progress.
- Give pupils more opportunity and encouragement to develop skills of independence and responsibility.
- Take all possible steps to provide a hall in which physical education, assemblies and other communal events can take place.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Throughout the school, pupils achieve satisfactorily. Variations from one year to the next in the attainment of pupils starting at the school lead to some corresponding fluctuations in the standards of pupils leaving the school. In recent years, pupils have generally left with above average standards. In 2005, however, leavers' standards were broadly average, reflecting an unusually high proportion of pupils in this year group with significant difficulties in learning or behaviour. Records of past pupils' long-term progress show the great majority making the progress expected and meeting the challenging targets set for them. The school recognises that a small number made less progress than they should and in the last year has improved processes for tracking pupils' progress and matching the challenge and support within the teaching to each pupil's needs. Present pupils, both within the Foundation Stage and in Years 1-6, are

making at least satisfactory progress regardless of differing ability levels and individual needs. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are soundly supported and they, too, make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall, with some particular strengths. Behaviour and relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils have good attitudes to school. They say that they 'really enjoy school' and show this in their behaviour, good attendance, punctuality and willingness to learn. They feel that they have an effective voice through the school council and they make a satisfactory contribution to the community. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A firm sense of right and wrong underpins their good behaviour. They respect the beliefs of others, though they have less awareness of other aspects of cultural diversity. Spiritual development is particularly strong, as seen in a high quality assembly in which pupils voiced their feelings about friendship with care and empathy. The style of assemblies is hindered, however, by the lack of a school hall. This also limits the amount of physical exercise pupils can take through PE, particularly when the weather is wet. However, pupils do know how to stay safe and be healthy and are beginning to adopt healthy practices. Pupils' development of basic skills and their growth in confident and positive attitudes support their preparation for the demands of adult and working life. However, apart from some charitable fund-raising, pupils have too few opportunities to develop qualities of independence, responsibility and initiative.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are of satisfactory standard. Teaching seen in lessons across the classes ranged from satisfactory to very good quality. In all of them, pupils showed interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm, behaving well and tackling their work with care. In the best lessons, the pace and content were especially lively and pupils responded with particular determination, thanks to the ways teachers set stimulating tasks suited to everyone's needs and rewarded success. In other lessons, a few pupils showed some lack of independence in being able to get on with learning on their own. Good guidance and support from the headteacher have improved a range of practices, particularly in the use of close assessments of pupils' progress to plan the work and support they are to be given. Both this range of developments and the team of teachers are largely new and, as a result, changes are not yet fully and consistently implemented. For example, in some classes the helpful marking of pupils' work and sharing of targets with them are helping them to a good understanding of their learning and how to improve, but this practice is not as evident in other classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall but with particular strength in the range of additional activities, such as clubs and visits, that extend learning opportunities. There is good attendance at lunchtime and after-school activities, although opportunities for the younger pupils are few. There are some good sports activities and good links with other schools to enhance sporting achievements. The residential experience for the oldest pupils provides good physical and social opportunities, and is highly valued by the pupils. The curriculum caters soundly for the range of needs and abilities of pupils, including those who have learning difficulties or disabilities; they are fully included in all aspects of the school. The school has identified aspects of the curriculum which are a current focus for improvement. Teachers are working hard to develop curricular links across different subjects so that pupils can have further opportunities to improve their workplace skills. For example, they have begun to make good use of their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in other subjects. A good example seen was a literacy lesson when pupils practised their writing skills as they wrote a report of their recent science investigation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is satisfactory. There are good procedures to keep a check on how well pupils are doing both personally and in their learning. Systems to safeguard pupils' health and welfare are generally sound but some staff have not received recent updating on child protection procedures. Some pupils and parents are aware of an isolated case of bullying in the past, but new preventive policies and practices appear to be effective currently. Support and guidance for pupils is improving in several ways, including through improved links with parents to promote a joint approach to helping pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There are several positive features but, as they are new, their effectiveness in raising standards has yet to prove itself. Since the previous inspection, the many changes of staff at all levels have hindered school improvement. Improvement in the long term has been satisfactory but the significant fact is that the pace of improvement has accelerated greatly in the last year with the establishment of a settled staff under the good leadership of the new headteacher. Making good use of advice from the local authority, the headteacher has made a root-and-branch review of school practices which has led to the school's own accurate assessment of its strengths and of what needs to be improved. The headteacher and her deputy share a clear and convincing vision for the school's future and have a good strategic plan for making it reality. The school is rightly planning to increase the contribution of several other staff new to the school to making checks

on the school's performance. Good plans for school improvement, taking account of parents', pupils' and governors' views, are made, with priorities and action plans that match the school's needs. Staff are united in a shared commitment to improvement. Governors have improved in their contribution to monitoring the school's performance and supporting planning, and they are fulfilling their responsibilities satisfactorily. Clear recent improvement in many areas of the school's work is evident and the capacity for further school improvement is good.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Dear Pupils, The inspectors who visited your school recently want to say a big 'thank you' to you all. You were very friendly and interesting to talk to and we really enjoyed our visit. You told us that you like your school and enjoy school life. We could see why when we came to your lessons and saw how keenly you joined in. It was good to see how well you behave and what a good effort you make with your work. You get on well with each other and with the grown-ups. We think you make progress at school in the way you should, but it would be good if you could make still faster progress. The school agrees with us that you already have a satisfactory education but that it could be still better. You have many new teachers and a new headteacher who are making a lot of improvements. We are asking the school to continue with these changes and to check that they are helping all the children in all the classes to do still better. We found that you have good attitudes and that you tackle school life confidently and sensibly. We are asking the school to help you make more use of these good points. This could mean encouraging you to find things out for yourself, work on your own and use your initiative. We think you will like this challenge and be keen to show just how much you can do for yourselves. You told us how upset you are that the school has lost the use of the hall where you used to do PE, have assemblies and put on plays and musical events. We agree that this is most unfortunate and have asked the school to do all it can to provide a hall. We wish you the very best for the future,

Yours sincerely, M H Cole Lead inspector Alexandra House 33 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE T
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