



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Northfleet

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118868
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280416
Inspection dates 26 June 2006 to 27 June 2006
Reporting inspector Helen Hutchings AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Springhead Road Northfleet Gravesend, Kent DA11 9QZ
School category	Voluntary aided	Telephone number	01474 533515
Age range of pupils	4 to 11	Fax number	01474 333404
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair of governors	Mrs C O'Callaghan
Number on roll	186	Headteacher	Miss Maureen Jackson
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000		

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 26 June 2006 - 27 June 2006	Inspection number 280416
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School is an average-sized primary school for pupils within the parish. About half of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from Asian or African backgrounds, and this is higher than in most schools. There is an average proportion of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.

About a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, broadly in line with other schools. More pupils join the school at times other than the normal time of entry than is found in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstandingly effective school and even better than the school assessed itself in its self-evaluation. Parents and pupils are proud of the school, one parent writing, 'I feel very proud that my children are part of such a wonderful community and cannot emphasise enough how good this school is.' The staff, under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, work exceptionally well as a team, which results in pupils thriving academically within a secure and caring learning environment.

The quality of education in the Reception class is good, preparing children well for later learning and helping them to reach the levels expected for their age. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils achieve exceptionally high standards because of good teaching and a rich curriculum.

Leadership of the school is focused well on ensuring the best possible educational experiences for pupils. Their progress is monitored closely and effective action taken if a pupil is seen to be falling behind. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and the school improvement plan identifies realistic areas for further development. The school has a good track record of successfully bringing about improvement. Standards which were already high when the school was last inspected have risen further. The quality of marking and setting of individual targets, identified as weaknesses at the time, are now strengths of the school. The school provides very good value for money and is well set to continue to provide a very high quality of education in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has no significant weaknesses and is well placed to improve current levels of achievement even further by implementing the priorities already identified in its improvement plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children enter the school in the Reception class with lower levels of skills than those normally found in children of their age. They settle quickly and enjoy learning so that by the time they join Year 1, children have caught up and their levels across the areas of learning are in line with those expected for their age.

Throughout the rest of the school, pupils build exceptionally well on this foundation. Standards in the tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 are significantly above national averages. Indeed, the gap between school and national performance increases overall from Year 2 to 6. Performance has been consistently high over many years. In 2005, English results were slightly lower than previous years because higher-attaining pupils did not do well enough in writing tests. This was addressed quickly and three quarters of the current Year 6 pupils are working at the higher levels.

The high standards represent outstanding achievement for all groups of pupils. It is particularly impressive for those pupils whose continuity of education was disrupted when they changed schools or who joined the school speaking little English. The school consistently meets the challenging targets it sets for its performance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have excellent attitudes, thoroughly enjoy school and are proud of it. Attendance is well above average, behaviour is exemplary and racial harmony is the norm. As such, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The strong emphasis given to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to develop a sensitive approach to everyday issues, and to appreciate the achievement of others. They feel safe from bullying and know there is always an adult or friend with whom they can share concerns.

Pupils contribute well to the school and local community. They show initiative and enjoy taking responsibility. The school council makes an effective contribution to the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils know their opinions are valued and adults are trustworthy. They fundraise for charities, help with parish fêtes, and participate in activities which develop skills in negotiating and decision making. These activities also help pupils to gain a clear understanding of wider social and economic issues and the situation of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils have a secure understanding of the need for safety, regular exercise and healthy eating. They enjoy the fresh fruit provided each day, and the take-up of available sporting activities is very good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from the consistently good teaching that is a feature throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour, and pupils show good levels of concentration. The sustained fast pace of lessons means that not a moment is wasted and results in exceptional rates of progress during pupils' time in the school. Teaching is underpinned by teachers' good subject knowledge and thorough planning. They set interesting tasks which match the differing needs of pupils very well. Teachers always explain the learning objective well so that pupils understand their learning and are able to review their progress at the end of the lesson. Homework is a feature of the school's emphasis on developing independent learners and tasks frequently include personal research. Where interactive whiteboards are available, teachers use these very well to add interest to learning. The installation of more is a school priority to improve learning even further. The school has effectively inducted many new teachers into the school recently and, as they become more experienced, it knows how teaching will develop further to make learning even more relevant for pupils.

Children and teachers have a very good rapport. Teachers know pupils and their achievement very well. Progress is monitored closely and used very effectively to set individual targets for improvement or to plan additional help when a pupil is seen to be falling behind the school's expectations. Pupils say that they find their targets helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

This area of the school's provision is outstanding. The curriculum meets the needs of the school very well. Emphasis is rightly placed on literacy and numeracy, and the school successfully develops these skills in all subjects. The links made between subjects are already purposeful and make learning relevant and enjoyable for pupils. The school plans to refine these links further. Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed well.

The curriculum is enriched in a variety of ways, including French and residential experiences for older pupils and a series of whole-school themed weeks. An exceptionally wide range of visits to local places of interest brings learning alive for pupils, as do the many visitors to the school. Pupils participate in a very wide range of clubs, meeting a variety of interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The level of care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding. It makes a significant contribution to their enjoyment of school and eagerness to learn. Very good relationships throughout the school mean learners are confident to approach adults with any problems. Procedures for child protection, risk assessments and health and safety are rigorous. Thorough background checks are made on all adults working with children. Arrangements to help children settle into Reception, and to transfer to their next stage of education, are effective and help learners to become confident in dealing with new situations.

In class, pupils receive much encouragement and ongoing support. Teachers' thorough marking of work helps pupils understand how to improve. The support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those identified as gifted and talented, is very effective. Equally effective personal support is given to pupils at the early stages of learning English. The work of teaching assistants is well focused and makes a significant contribution to all pupils' academic progress and personal development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. Pervading the school is a strong focus on both pupils' academic achievement and personal development. The

headteacher provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by the deputy head, staff and governing body. There is a shared commitment to achieving the school's aims. The headteacher knows the school and pupils very well, and has a clear understanding about what needs to be done to maintain high achievement and improve provision further.

The school improvement plan is a well-structured and effective tool to move the school forward. It reflects the views of all those involved with the school. Teaching and learning are monitored rigorously. Detailed and accurate assessment of pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science enables the school to set challenging targets for further improvement. The school has very effective procedures for monitoring how well it is doing, and evaluates its performance realistically. The school regularly seeks the views of parents and pupils and acts on them to improve provision, for example, by improving security of the school site and enhancing playground provision. Governors carry out their duties exceptionally well. They manage finances effectively and take a full part in strategic planning. As such, they have played an important role in securing the significant improvements made to the accommodation, and in the development of provision for ICT, which is rated highly by pupils. The school has an exceptional drive and determination, giving it a good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	1	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	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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?	1	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?	1	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	1	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	1	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 your help and friendliness when Mr Thelwell and I visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you to find out what your school does well and want to let you know what we thought.

We are pleased that the school does most things really well.

You work very hard and concentrate well in lessons. Your work is excellent and helps you to do exceptionally well in tests.

Your teachers give you interesting work in lessons and for homework. They mark your work carefully and we are glad that you find the targets they set for you helpful.

Your behaviour is exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. This means that lessons and playtime are happy and enjoyable.

You told us that you feel safe in school and that there is always someone to talk to if you have a problem. You also said that occasionally there are problems, but that an adult always helps you to sort it out quickly.

You have a lot of interesting things to do outside lessons and we are impressed that so many of you attend clubs and have the opportunity to go on residential visits.

You understand how to take responsibility for your own safety and to take regular exercise and eat healthily.

You told us that you did not think much needed to be changed in the school and we agree. The school has planned some things for the future, such as making more links between subjects and having interactive whiteboards in all classrooms, which we think will help you to do even better in your work.