



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119620
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280613
Inspection dates 7 February 2006 to 8 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Lynne Read

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Aldrens Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Lancaster
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Lancashire, LA1 2DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01524 65576
Number on roll	248	Fax number	01524 60588
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Paul Ryan
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school in the city of Lancaster. Most pupils are of white British backgrounds and a few have Asian or African heritage. The vast majority speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is above average. When they enter the reception class, children's attainment is below that usually seen. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties is above average; of these, an average proportion have statements of special educational need. The school has experienced a period of staffing instability and is currently led by its two assistant headteachers and a temporary associate headteacher from another school.

The site of the school is extensive and includes three buildings. In recognition of the good work done in developing healthy lifestyles, St Joseph's holds the 'Healthy Schools' award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges that it provides a satisfactory quality of education and is improving and inspectors agree. Value for money is satisfactory. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The assistant headteachers, with valuable support from a temporary associate headteacher, provide strong leadership and have made substantial improvements over the last year. The school is successfully implementing well-laid plans to raise standards. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although in recent years it has been inadequate.

Pupils are making good progress in Years 1 and 2 and standards are rising. Progress is now satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 and good in Years 5 and 6, where pupils are making up for shortfalls in their previous learning. Standards in the present Year 6 are below average but those for subsequent years are average and rising. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. Improvements since the previous inspection are satisfactory, although many have been made recently. There have been good improvements in the curriculum and learning for information and communication technology (ICT) and in the library provision. These successes, together with the school's accurate self-evaluation, show that there is satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The pupils' personal development is good. The school provides good care for the pupils and offers good support for those with learning difficulties. All pupils have equal access to all that the school offers. The curriculum is satisfactory but some of the resources and facilities for the Foundation Stage are inadequate. Attendance levels are below average. The school has strong links with the church and makes good use of outside specialists; both factors support pupils' learning well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the implementation of planned actions to improve progress and standards in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve pupils' attendance;
- Improve resources in the Foundation Stage and facilities for outdoor activities in the reception class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is improving because pupils are reaching the challenging targets that are now set. It is satisfactory overall and good in Years 1 and 2.

When the children join the school aged three, their attainment is below that which is typical for their age and a significant number have difficulty with communication and socialising with others. They make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in personal development. Attainment is just below average when pupils enter Year 1.

Pupils currently make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and attain average standards. This represents a good improvement on previous years. The older junior pupils have experienced some disruptions to their learning in the past and, as a result, there are gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teaching focuses sharply on these gaps and standards are improving, but, because of the short time span and the amount of catch-up work needed, they remain below average for Year 6. There are some promising indicators, however, for Year 5 pupils, for whom attainment is average. Boys and girls and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds progress equally well in lessons. There is good support for pupils who have learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language; consequently they make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say they feel safe and secure. They behave well and are polite and courteous. Relationships are very good; pupils are confident learners because they like and trust their teachers. Spiritual development is outstanding; moral and social development is good and pupils have a sound understanding of the multi-cultural nature of society. The strong Catholic ethos pervades all aspects of school life and contributes significantly to the strong sense of community. Pupils are confident to discuss personal issues which helps them to make sense of their experiences. Prayer and reflection are strong features of school life. Many opportunities for collaborative work and play help to develop social skills. Pupils clearly know wrong from right and good actions are constantly encouraged and rewarded.

Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and thoroughly enjoy the attractive selection of fruit on offer daily. Preparation for the world of work and an understanding of economic well-being are enhanced through many opportunities to help with the smooth running of the school, in decision making through the school council and fund raising activities for charities. Most pupils attend regularly although a small minority do not. Consequently, attendance is below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and there are some strengths. Behaviour management is good; consequently, pupils develop positive attitudes to their learning. Praise and encouragement in class inspire them to work hard.

In the Foundation Stage, learning in the adult-directed sessions is good but inadequate resources and the lack of an outdoor area for the reception class limit the scope of teachers' planning for independent activities. As a result, children learn satisfactorily; they develop independence and a sense of curiosity. The school recently identified some aspects of teaching in Years 1 to 6 that needed improvement. The new assessment

and target setting systems that were subsequently developed are providing teachers with good information to plan lessons. As a result, teaching and learning are now good in Years 1 and 2 and standards have improved. In Years 3 to 6, the challenging targets are enabling older pupils to close the gaps in their previous learning and younger ones to consolidate what they know. At present, learning is satisfactory across the four years, but good in Years 5 and 6.

Marking is good and provides pupils with very useful feedback on how well they have done in achieving the aims of the lesson and towards their targets. Those who are known to find learning hard are given effective help, often from well-informed teaching assistants, so that they do well. Those with higher capabilities have extra challenge to stretch them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and good provision is made for pupils who have learning difficulties or who are learning English as an additional language. The Foundation Stage planning covers all the recommended areas of learning but activities are somewhat restricted by the quality and range of resources and the lack of an outside area for the reception class. In Years 1 to 6 planning is thorough and subjects are often linked together, providing some good opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they learn. This is especially effective in promoting English, mathematics and ICT skills throughout the school and in creating interesting, practical sessions for the infants. Teachers are aware of the need to extend investigative skills in science and of providing more opportunities for pupils to evaluate and plan their own learning. A satisfactory range of opportunities including visits, visitors and out of school activities, enrich the curriculum and add to pupils' enjoyment of lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Overall, this area is satisfactory, but care and support for pupils' personal development are good. Parents appreciate that all pupils are known and valued as individuals. Health and safety issues are given good attention. Child protection procedures are now secure and all pupils' special needs, including those of a medical nature, are met. The guidance provided for pupils' academic progress is being further developed and, at present, is satisfactory. New systems for checking and tracking pupils' progress are effective. The information is well used to set targets for learning which provide sound advice for pupils on how to improve. Teachers are aware of the need however, to involve pupils more fully in assessing how well they are doing and in setting their own goals for achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, these aspects are satisfactory, with strengths in leadership. The school has undergone recent, significant improvement under the good leadership of the assistant and associate headteachers. Outcomes include higher standards in Years 1 and 2, better progress in Years 3 to 6, improved monitoring of provision and strong teamwork based on a shared vision of raising standards. There is satisfactory capacity for the school to improve further. Teachers, governors, parents and the local authority have all contributed their views to the school's self-evaluation schedule. As a result, senior staff have a clear idea of what needs to be done and a detailed plan showing how it will be achieved. Planned actions are well-chosen and, despite standards remaining below average in Year 6, they are having a beneficial effect on pupils' progress throughout the school.

Management is satisfactory. There is scope to extend the role of subject managers in checking teaching and learning and this successful senior management team lacks stability because one appointment is temporary.

Governors are keen to develop their role in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and are undertaking training to enable this. At present, their governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	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	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	4	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	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?	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	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	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

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St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

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9 February 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me and Mr Earley when we recently visited your school. The conversations that we had with groups and individuals were very interesting and we thoroughly enjoyed our time at your school.

There are lots of things that we think are good at St Joseph's. Some of them are:

you are polite and friendly and you enjoy your lessons

you are doing much better with your learning now

your teachers take good care to keep you happy and healthy

you contribute well to the running of the school through the many jobs you do and help to make decisions through your council members.

I know that your teachers work hard and have lots of plans to improve your school, including the progress that you make. We have suggested that they might look at some other things as well. These are:

encouraging those who have too much time off school to attend more regularly and

improving some of the equipment and learning space for the younger ones.

Thank you once again for helping us so much with the inspection. I hope that you will continue to make St Joseph's a friendly and super place to be.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Read (Lead inspector)