



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Oxford

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123216
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281432
Inspection dates 23 May 2006 to 24 May 2006
Reporting inspector Christopher Schenk

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Headley Way
School category	Voluntary aided		Headington
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		OX3 7SX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01865 763357
Number on roll	306	Fax number	001865 308436
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J Batey
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs B McCormack

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 23 May 2006 - 24 May 2006	Inspection number 281432
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's Primary School is a Roman Catholic school in Oxford that serves three parishes and is a little larger than the average primary school. The age range was extended to 11 in September 2003; prior to that it was a First School. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national figure. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is a little above average, and the proportion who speak English as an additional language has grown steadily over the last few years and is now approaching the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is much lower than usual: it is about a third of the national figure, though the proportion with a statement of special educational need is only a little below average.

At the time of the inspection there was a 'Curriculum Week' going on that focused on Asia. The normal timetable was suspended for the week and instead pupils followed a programme of activities and visits, planned to give them experiences to broaden their knowledge and understanding of countries in Asia, notably India, China and Japan.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'It's a bright and colourful school and you always feel comfortable in it. Everybody's really kind and they always help you out when you need it. If you have any problems it's really easy to talk to someone because there are lots of people you can trust. They take time so that they understand you. The school has been like a family to me.' These are some of the views of Year 6 pupils about the school they are about to leave. It is indeed a good school, with some outstanding features, that gives good value for money.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and they are well cared for and supported. They are given a good start in the Foundation Stage and make good progress throughout the school, particularly during their last two years. They reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science and achieve well in other subjects. They are given a good range of interesting things to do. They are motivated to work hard and their attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive.

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher's leadership in particular is outstanding. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and rightly judges its overall effectiveness to be good. Relative weaknesses are accurately identified and something is done about them. In this way, the school has shown a good capacity to improve. The teaching is generally good and never less than satisfactory, but, as the school's own monitoring demonstrates, there is some variation. The quality of marking is also variable, though at its best it is very good indeed. The school has identified the need to develop its support for the growing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Parents think very highly of the school. As one of them wrote: 'There are numerous reasons why I am more than happy with St Joseph's, but for me the relationship and communication between parent and teacher is the one I most appreciate'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to spread good practice in teaching, and specifically in marking, so that the teaching becomes consistently good.
- Develop the support for pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. When pupils first come to the school at around the age of four, most have the knowledge and skills expected of their age, many have particularly well developed skills, and a few are at an early stage in their personal development. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make good progress and reach high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, pupils make particularly good progress and reach standards that are always above average in English, mathematics

and science. Pupils also achieve well in other subjects, notably music, and design and technology.

The school analyses test results carefully, and uses the analysis to identify areas of relative weakness and to do something about them. For example, last year, pupils in Year 2 did much better in their reading than in their writing. The school has put in place effective measures to improve the writing: this year standards in writing have risen while standards in reading have been sustained.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress in their learning because their needs are generally identified early and they are given well focused support, particularly from teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding: they are developing as sensitive, aware and highly motivated individuals who have a strong sense of community and of responsibility, and a clear understanding of right and wrong.

Attendance is good. Pupils behave well. They feel safe, are aware that school rules are there for a purpose, and are secure in the knowledge that adults in the school are there to help them in times of need. They make an outstanding contribution to the school community. Within the developing School Council, the older pupils display a mature level of altruism. For example, they are keen to plan further improvements to the outside area, even though they will not be completed before they leave the school: 'It's nice to be doing something for the children lower down the school'.

The pupils are particularly good at adopting healthy life styles. They value the cleanliness and hygiene of the school premises greatly. 'Staff work hard to get the school clean,' said one. 'The school has a very high standard of hygiene and friendship' added another. The help of parents is enlisted to monitor the contents of the pupils' lunch-boxes, and they are encouraged to walk or cycle to school when possible. The provision of drinking water throughout the day has improved their concentration.

The high standards pupils reach in basic skills make a good contribution to their future economic well-being. Pupils have exceptionally good attitudes to their learning, showing high levels of enjoyment in their work. The enthusiasm with which they engaged in the experiences offered during the Asian week typifies their lively and open-minded approach to cultures other than their own.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching is generally good. It ranges from the satisfactory to the outstanding. Teaching assistants make an exceptionally valuable contribution: they are confident, well trained and very clear about what is expected of them.

The Asian week that was taking place during the inspection was very well planned by all the staff. An extremely good collection of resources had been assembled. Visitors to the school contributed to the teaching of Filipino cooking, Chinese calligraphy and Indian music and dance. Some outstanding teaching was observed in sessions led by teachers, teaching assistants and visitors, for example in information and communication technology (ICT), Indian dance, and design and technology.

Work in books, and the school's own monitoring of teaching, shows that there is some variation in the quality of the teaching in different age groups and between parallel classes. The marking is always regular and encouraging, but does not always give sufficient pointers for improvement. The best marking is to be found in the literacy books of the upper juniors, where teachers show insight and sensitivity in their analysis of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and make perceptive comments that suggest precise and helpful ways to improve.

The learning is particularly good. The pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning: they are hard-working and enthusiastic in their response to the work they are given. Older pupils greatly value the comments that are made on their work and feel that the suggestions they are given really help them to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and includes the teaching of Italian in Key Stage 2. It is reviewed regularly to reflect new initiatives, relative weaknesses in standards and the changing profile of the school. Statutory requirements are met, including provision for drugs and relationships education. Appropriate time is allocated to the teaching of key skills in all year groups and curricular provision meets the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. The school makes good use of its attractive grounds and is actively planning even better ways of utilising them.

The school has identified a relative weakness in writing and initiatives have been put in place to develop the curriculum in order to bring about improvement. The planning has become more rigorous and coherent. Resources to support the teaching of writing within and beyond literacy lessons have improved. There are now more frequent opportunities for drama and for writing at length. Another recent initiative has enhanced pupils' opportunities to develop and use their ICT skills within other subjects.

The Asia week exemplified very well the school's innovative approach. Well-planned activities, involving visitors and visits, promoted pupils' interest in different countries

and cultures and contributed to their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. Their learning is further enhanced through a rich programme of day and residential visits, sporting activities and school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good with some outstanding features. The pupils are very well looked after. Teachers, and other adults, take the time to listen to the pupils and to talk through issues of discipline. One pupil said, 'The teachers are very friendly and you feel welcome. If you do something wrong you can get sent to the headteacher, but she does not shout at you but explains why what you have done is wrong.' Because of the clear understanding of right and wrong this promotes, and the trust placed in learners to make sensible choices, there are few rules. They generally relate to matters of health and safety and are rarely broken.

Appropriate arrangements are in place for child protection. On the very rare occasions when serious behavioural issues arise, effective use is made of outside support such as the educational psychologist.

Pupils' progress is monitored well and effective arrangements put in place when pupils do not make the progress expected. Pupils are set individual targets to help them to know how they are getting on and what they need to do next, but there is some inconsistency in the way in which these are displayed and used. The school has rightly identified the need for staff training to help them to support pupils who speak English as an additional language more effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's clear, direct and energetic leadership is outstanding. It gives the staff a shared sense of purpose and a commitment to continuous improvement. The deputy head has a co-ordinating role for the curriculum and assessment, as well as leading on religious education and personal, social and health education. The subject co-ordinators' role has been developed over recent years and they now have good opportunities to gain an overview of their subject through observing lessons and monitoring planning. They have clearly delegated responsibilities and speak highly of the support they are given by the headteacher. They play a significant role in the development of the curriculum, for example in the initiatives to improve writing, and in the introduction of a new scheme of work in art to ensure that skills are progressively built upon.

The school's self-evaluation is perceptive and accurate. The school has shown a good capacity to improve by identifying relative weaknesses, putting together a programme for improvement and involving all staff in implementing it.

The governors play a very full part in the life of the school. They have an excellent working relationship with the headteacher and many governors have responsibility for

a subject or aspect and work closely with the appropriate co-ordinator. They are given information at a sufficient level of detail for them to challenge as well as support the school and fulfil their role as a critical friend. Parents support the school very well indeed, in fund raising, in giving voluntary help and in many other ways. The response to a parental questionnaire, sent out at the time of the inspection, was overwhelmingly positive.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	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	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	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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	2	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	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

Pupils

Thank you very much for your welcome when we visited your school this week and for telling us such a lot of things about it. These are some of the things you said: 'It's a bright and colourful school and you always feel comfortable in it. Everybody's really kind and they always help you out when you need it. If you have any problems it's really easy to talk to someone because there are lots of people you can trust. They take time so that they understand you. The school has been like a family to me.'

It was a particularly interesting and exciting time to visit the school during your Asian week. We were impressed by your very positive attitudes to learning: you worked hard in all the activities that we visited and took a real interest in the new things you were learning about. We also had a chance to look at some of your books, so we could find out what sort of work you do when you are not taking part in special events. We think you are making good progress and learning about a broad range of different things. We particularly liked the way the literacy books are marked in the oldest classes and you told us how much you like having detailed comments and how helpful they are for you to improve your work.

We met your headteacher and one of the governors before we left. We told them that we think St Joseph's is a very good school. Your teachers are always wanting to improve so we asked them to think about two ways of getting even better. We think they should continue to share good practice and learn from each other. We also think they should find more ways of supporting those of you who speak more than one language.

Best wishes

Christopher Schenk

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools