



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Bridgwater

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123846
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 281576
Inspection dates 19 October 2005 to 20 October 2005
Reporting inspector Neville Grenyer HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Park Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Bridgwater
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Somerset TA6 7EE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01278 422786
Number on roll	236	Fax number	01278 429791
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Kevin Chamberlain
Date of previous inspection	15 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Tom Doyle

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 19 October 2005 - 20 October 2005	Inspection number 281576
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector

Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is situated in the town of Bridgwater in Somerset and its pupils come mainly from that town, with some from the surrounding villages. It is a large and popular school. Pupils are mainly of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is about average. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school is lower than most schools.

The school is has had a period of uncertainty in leadership: at the start of 2005, the headteacher fell ill, and his absence through much of the year culminated in his retirement through ill health in June. A locum headteacher has been in charge until suffering illness recently, and there is now an acting headteacher.

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 its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory and inspectors agree. The locum headteacher has provided good leadership, bringing the school to a satisfactory level of management, and ensuring that the school meets current legal requirements. The acting headteacher is carrying out this role well. However, with the changes in leadership, monitoring of teaching has been less rigorous than normal. The school has made good progress on the issues raised at the last inspection. It provides satisfactory value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

St Joseph's is a welcoming community, and pupils' personal development is very important to the school. Pupils are eager to come to the school and attendance is outstanding, with no unauthorised absence. Parents are very happy with the school. The provision in the Foundation Stage is a particular strength, and pupils make good progress, especially in laying the foundations of numeracy, and in personal and social development. Overall, pupils make the progress that is expected of them, so that general standards are slightly above average at the end of Year 6. Although standards of writing are not as good as they should be in some classes, the school is working hard to rectify this.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and pupils show good attitudes to their work. The school is at the early stages of reviewing its assessment policy and procedures. It is beginning to make effective use of data to identify accurately areas for development. However, not all lessons fully challenge all pupils and pupils do not have clear targets to show them what they are aiming for. Most lessons are well planned with a variety of activities but the delivery of some lessons is not interesting enough to ensure pupils' good progress.

The governing body has re-formed with a very high number of new governors. Governors are actively planning the school's development and updating policies, but inexperience means that many are in need of training in their role.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the standards of writing in Years 1-6
- extend good assessment practice so that lessons are always pitched at the right level and pupils know what they need to do to improve
- improve performance management of teaching so that all lessons fully engage pupils' interest
- ensure that the new governors understand their strategic role in ensuring the school's leadership and financial future.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' attainment is about average on entry but there is a wide range of individual ability. Pupils in the Foundation Year make good progress especially in personal, social and physical development. In Key Stages 1 and 2, they make the progress that is expected of them, so that general standards are average or even slightly above average

at the end of Year 6. The data shows that progress is not yet consistently good but that there is good value added between Key Stages 1 and 2.

By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils score slightly above average in reading and mathematics and about average in writing; their performance is generally lower than that of pupils in similar schools in reading and writing, although mathematics improved in this respect in 2005.

In 2004 in Key Stage 2, pupils' results were above average in mathematics and science and slightly above in English. Performance dipped in mathematics and science in 2005 and English improved. However, within English, reading performance is significantly better than writing.

The school caters well for its more able pupils, and for the less able, with pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities making significant progress. The data suggests, and observation confirms, that average pupils could attain higher in reading and writing at Key Stage 1.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Attendance is outstanding, reflecting parents' commitment and the pupils' eagerness to come to school. They behave extremely well, show very positive attitudes and have excellent relationships with each other and with staff. They work hard and sustain concentration. The school's Catholic ethos underpins the pupils' outstanding moral development and their good spiritual and social development. The pupils show their satisfactory understanding of culture in religious education, art and design and music. When questioned, older pupils showed an appropriate awareness of Britain's rich multi-cultural heritage, but this could be developed further.

Pupils accept responsibility well, by managing the overhead projector during hymn practice or supporting younger pupils as playtime friends. They welcome the newly introduced school council where they can express their views. The children in the Reception classes learn well from their own ideas, but as yet the pupils' independence as learners, although satisfactory, is not being developed with equal effectiveness across the school. Pupils develop a good understanding of health and safety, for example through safe practice in games lessons and healthy eating at break times. They contribute well to the school and wider community through fund-raising events to raise money for charities and curriculum projects. Older pupils learn to write curriculum vitae and gain skills important to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and are improving rapidly. Although lessons are often good, pupils' learning is constrained by variable practice and expectations of what they should achieve, with a few lessons that are not interesting or challenging enough. Improved support from leaders and managers is now promoting consistency in the quality of teaching. The recent improvement in writing in Key Stage 2, for example, shows how a unified approach improves provision. The sharing of best practice, such as clarifying learning objectives with pupils at the beginning of lessons and revisiting them at the end, are strengthening pupils' progress. Less effective aspects of teaching seen during the inspection included insufficient expectations of the quality of pupils' recorded work and overlong whole class discussions. Teaching strengths, especially in English and mathematics, and in Reception classes, included well-planned group activity well matched to the pupils' capability, and building on previous learning. Much is being done to improve assessment of pupils' work and progress: more accurate information is now used with increasing success to target pupils' future needs, and involving parents more productively in their children's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance and meets statutory requirements. A good range of clubs, visits and events extend the opportunities offered to pupils. A Year 2 visit to Killerton House made them very enthusiastic and brought beneficial autumnal experiences, stimulating work across the curriculum. The teachers improve pupils' learning through links between subjects, as in Year 1 when labelling diagrams in science and design and technology. However, ICT is not used to best effect across the school. Increasing staff collaboration and delegation of responsibility is helping development of creative, practical activities. These are adding to the pupils' enjoyment and interest in lessons. Children in the Reception classes enjoy well-planned experiences in all the required areas of learning of the Foundation Stage. Pupils with special educational needs have their needs addressed within well-considered individual education plans.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support given to the pupils are satisfactory. The day-to-day personal help from caring adults is an important feature. Until recently, assistance had not been secured by the required policies and procedures, and any subsequent changes to staff weakened provision. The locum headteacher, with good support from colleagues, has set in place appropriate policies and procedures that now sustain the pupils' health and welfare. Parents acknowledge this improved support.

Teachers monitor pupils' personal development well and are developing more effective assessments of their academic progress. These are mostly used satisfactorily to inform teaching and learning. Although teachers share learning objectives well in lessons, raising expectations and giving pupils clear ways to improve through setting targets are still being introduced.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory in spite of the number of changes of leadership that have happened in 2005. Effective self-evaluation has enabled the staff and governors, and the LEA, to clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school. A school development plan is now in place. Members of staff consider that they are members of a team, with their own responsibilities clear so that they know what needs to be done. However, until recently teachers have lacked support from rigorous performance management-monitoring and feedback of the quality of their work and its impact on learning. The school is starting to strengthen and develop the role of its subject coordinators so that they can assist in raising standards through analysis of data and through monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects. Learning support assistants are well deployed and planning is effectively including them. The new governing body is taking its role very seriously and the framework is in place to provide the school with a good capacity to improve.

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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	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?	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	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	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	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

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Park Avenue Bridgewater Somerset TA6 7EE

21 October 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for helping us when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you were learning. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and parents said that they are happy about what you do in class and after school. We were very impressed that so few of you are absent from school.

You have some good teachers and we think that you work very well and want to learn. The young children in Butterflies and Ladybirds are making good progress. We think that most pupils in the school are making the sort of progress that we expect to see. We want you all to do as well as you can so we have asked your teachers to make sure that all your lessons interest you, and to make sure the work you are given is hard enough. We think it would help some of you to have clearer advice on how to do even better, especially in your writing.

We enjoyed coming to assembly and hearing you sing. We think that the new school council made some very useful suggestions about how to improve your life at school and we noticed that some of these have already been done. You said that you were happy that you had so many things during and after school. The swimming pool was especially popular but you also mentioned that your school encourages healthy eating and physical exercise. We saw some outstanding PE in the school hall.

Thank you once again for being so friendly and helpful on our visit.

Yours sincerely

Neville Grenyer Her Majesty's Inspector