



# St Joseph's Catholic Infants' School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 100854  
**Local Authority** Southwark  
**Inspection number** 285900  
**Inspection date** 20 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Cathie Munt HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant	<b>School address</b>	Pitman Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		London
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-7		SE5 0TS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	02077039264
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	180	<b>Fax number</b>	02072525661
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Father David Gibbons
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Cheryl Holdsworth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 October 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4-7	<b>Inspection date</b> 20 September 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 285900
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This two-form entry school serves a deprived part of Camberwell with largely high-rise social housing. Pupils enter the school with very low attainment and many have had no nursery education. A high proportion of the children are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing and comprises just over nine tenths of the school population. Over seven tenths are of Black or Black British-African descent. About one fifth of the pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Almost a quarter of the pupils have additional learning needs. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is low. The school has received Healthy School Status for promoting healthy lifestyles.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

St. Joseph's provides its pupils with an outstanding education. They come from a diverse range of backgrounds and heritage groups and the school offers them life enhancing experiences that prepare them most effectively for their journey through life. In the classrooms and playground relationships are exemplary. The pupils' confident responses and strong social and moral awareness are testimony to the exceptional care and support that they receive and to the school's distinctive Catholic ethos. This plays an integral part in developing high levels of care and respect among the school community and an unusual degree of self awareness and reflection among the pupils.

The school is highly regarded by pupils, staff, parishioners and educational partners because of its commitment to providing a positive, caring and inclusive approach in which everyone achieves well. The provision in the Foundation Stage has been improved since the last inspection and is excellent. There is an exciting variety of practical activities for pupils to enjoy and the teaching is of a high standard. Consequently, children achieve well. Pupils throughout the school make much better progress in their learning and social development than would be predicted from the very low level of attainment when they enter the school. This is the direct result of the teachers' consistently high expectations and a most effective curriculum that motivates pupils and provides them with excellent opportunities to practise their reading, writing, number and computer skills. Over the last five years standards have remained above those found nationally. This is all the more creditable because few pupils have been to a nursery, the majority arrive at the school having spoken another language at home, a large and growing proportion speaks no English on entry and an increasing number each year have specific learning difficulties such as autism. The teachers and other staff take all of this in their stride and through diligent planning and the high calibre of teaching across the school they create an oasis of educational calm where children quickly settle in and become competent learners.

Every single parent who responded to the inspection questionnaire was positive and one wrote, 'We have been delighted by the school, it has a very positive atmosphere and the children are made to feel part of a close community'. Last year another wrote, 'The school has been very, very helpful and relentless in the quest for the best potential of my child. The staff are the best staff I know and I wholly recommend them.'

The highly effective senior leadership team places the needs of pupils at the centre of all it does. Under the exemplary guidance of the headteacher all members of the school strive to give their pupils the very best education possible. The extended and enriched curriculum makes learning fun and the carefully thought out links between subjects make lessons relevant to the pupils' lives. This has had a positive impact on their achievement. The school, rightly, is focussing on increasing the pupils' independent learning and extending the mathematics skills of the more able pupils.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

\* Develop programmes, in addition to those for mathematics, to extend the most able pupils further.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards in national tests are above average and continue to rise in line with the national trend. This is most commendable in view of the possible difficulties presented by the school's cramped conditions and the increasing proportion of pupils who arrive speaking little English. Standards in reading are particularly good and this is helping the pupils to become confident and competent writers. Even this early in the term there was sufficient work in the pupils' books to see that they pay good attention to detail. Fewer pupils reach the higher level in mathematics than in reading or writing, mainly because of weaknesses in problem solving. The school has appropriate plans to improve this situation. All groups of pupils achieve equally well, including those from different ethnic backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is due to robust monitoring and tracking procedures ensuring that weaknesses are identified quickly and dealt with appropriately. From a very low starting point the majority of pupils leave the school having made outstanding progress in their studies.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Children enjoy coming to school and attend very well. They enjoy playing and learning together and listening to their teachers. All pupils have a school lunch and they say that they enjoy the well presented and healthy food. The Golden Rules they have devised with their teachers help them to feel safe and to support each other. Older children look after the newcomers at break and during lunch, both of which times are harmonious and orderly. Children enjoy tending the school garden, working with visiting artists and visiting the seaside and the countryside on outings. Their horizons are extended and their enjoyment is greatly increased by these trips and by working with visiting musicians and actors. The high level of basic skills that they develop, the opportunities provided to use their initiative and their involvement in community projects such as the Southwark Parks Initiative means that they are exceptionally well equipped for their future education. Behaviour is excellent and the school's Catholic ethos is evident in the pupils' highly developed moral and social awareness. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is rightly judged by the staff to be outstanding.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

The lessons seen and the selection of work reviewed demonstrated that teaching is outstanding. Teachers are excellent role models in their speaking and writing. Support staff are very well informed. They work most effectively with teachers to provide all pupils with the level of support and challenge required to promote high standards and develop effective, independent learners. For example, Spanish speaking pupils made very good progress in their learning when they received explanations in their own language. Teachers share good practice and this leads to consistency and high expectations. Subject leaders assess their areas of learning knowledgeably and the whole staff reflects regularly on how to improve the quality of teaching. Planning and assessment are exceptionally thorough and ensure that learning builds securely on what the pupils have done before.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The school's curriculum has been continually improved in recent years, and is exceptionally well matched to the pupils' needs. The changes introduced, for example in reading, have contributed to pupils' good progress and their outstanding personal development. Specialist lessons, such as those in art, music and PE, are provided during periods when class teachers are busy planning. A parent commented on the 'wonderful new dimension' that music has brought to the school. The development of computer work across the curriculum has enriched the pupils' learning experiences.

The curriculum is skilfully planned and subjects are linked seamlessly making learning relevant and fun. A Year 2 Black History lesson involved many other subject areas. Pupils used the computers, found Brazil on the map, designed a poster, read, recalled and recorded facts from a biography, sequenced Pele's story using pictures, talked about other famous footballers and reported to the class on what they had been doing. These activities had pupils completely engrossed and so involved that when discussing other matters with the inspector they were full of what they had been doing. Other lessons were equally engaging.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Outstanding care, guidance and support underpin the successful contribution that this school makes to each pupil's life chances. All of the adults respect the children, showing them by example and instruction how to behave well and encouraging them to succeed academically. Vulnerable children are particularly well supported by the work of the learning mentor. The assessment of work and the monitoring of progress are exemplary and are exceptionally well documented in portfolios and records.

Procedures for safeguarding the pupils are very sound and their health and safety are assured in the most attractive classrooms and security conscious site.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The headteacher and deputy headteacher's rigorous evaluation and review of priorities is a key factor in the school's success. There is excellent communication at all levels within the school and leaders' roles and responsibilities are clear. The headteacher and other managers are unified in their drive to raise standards for all pupils. They have managed this through extensive and expert monitoring of lessons, teachers' planning and the children's work. Robust monitoring and critical self-evaluation have resulted in managers having an accurate view of the school's performance. This has enabled them to maintain standards at a high level over the last few years against a background of an increasingly diverse school population and changes in staff. Data is used particularly well to identify areas for improvement. Training and shrewd recruitment has raised levels of expertise in key areas such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Extensive support is provided for new members of staff. The governors are well informed as a group and hold the school carefully to account for its assessment of standards, progress in teaching and value for money. The strengths that were clear at the previous inspection have been maintained and new areas such as more independent learning have come to the fore. The school takes very good account of the views of pupils and parents. In view of its many achievements, the leadership of the school demonstrates an outstanding capacity to bring about further improvements.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I enjoyed visiting your school, meeting you and your teachers and seeing some of your work. I felt most welcome. I agree with you and your parents that St Joseph's is an excellent school of which you can all be proud. These are some of the things that I thought were particularly good:

- \* You all get on so well together and care for one another.
- \* You are taught extremely well. Your lessons are interesting and fun.
- \* You work hard and achieve well.
- \* You know how to improve your work because teachers explain this clearly to you.
- \* The adults are kind and helpful and are there for you if you have a problem.
- \* Your behaviour is excellent, and you know all about living a healthy lifestyle.
- \* Your headteacher leads your school really well and all the other staff help her to make the school so good.

There isn't much about your school that could be better, but I noticed that some of you don't do quite as well in maths as you do in reading and writing. I agree with your teachers that this is because you need more practice at solving maths problems. Fortunately, your teachers are trying out different ways of helping you to do just this. We also agreed that it would be a good idea to try out some different work for those children who are already really good at things as an extra challenge. So that is what they are going to do!

Thank you for your help. I hope that you continue to enjoy the rest of your time at St. Joseph's.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Munt

Her Majesty's Inspector