

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102596
Local Authority	Kingston Upon Thames
Inspection number	286437
Inspection date	27 March 2007
Reporting inspector	George Rayner

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Vincent Flynn
Headteacher	Mrs Merryl Roberson
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2001
School address	The Fairfield Kingston Upon Thames KT1 2UP
Telephone number	020 8546 7178
Fax number	020 8974 6980

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is similar in size to most other primary schools. It is situated close to the centre of a London borough and most pupils live quite close to the school. There is some variation in their home circumstances, but these are relatively disadvantaged for most. Standards on entry to the Foundation Stage are below expectations. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. More than half the pupils come from minority ethnic communities and the proportion at an early stage of learning to speak English is above average. The most strongly represented groups are from Portuguese, Filipino, Polish and Tamil cultures. The current headteacher, who is in her second year in the school, has a temporary contract and the governors plan to appoint a permanent headteacher from September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Its strong commitment to the security, happiness and success of its pupils is shown by its good care, guidance and support. Its effectiveness is demonstrated by pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils show their enjoyment of school by their regular attendance, good behaviour, pride in their work and willingness to join in with all activities. Pupils understand well why it is important to live a healthy life. They know how to keep themselves safe and have good respect for rules to ensure their own and others' safety. They say that they feel safe and well cared for.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The adults give children a variety of stimulating activities that encourage them to explore and learn through playing. They show children how to work together cooperatively. As a result, children make good progress from their low starting points, particularly in learning to use language and their social skills. This is the result of recent improvements to provision because assessment evidence shows that pupils' standards had previously remained below average in Years 1 to 3. In Years 1 to 6, good teaching and learning and a good curriculum lead to good achievement for the pupils. As a result, they reach average standards by the end of Year 6 from a below average level in Year 3. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those at an early stage of learning to speak English have their needs carefully identified and well provided for. Therefore they make the same good progress as their classmates. The most able pupils usually make good use of their learning opportunities and also achieve similarly to their classmates. However, the challenge for these pupils is not consistently high enough to make the fullest use of their ability and enthusiasm to achieve even better.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is providing a very strong vision and clear direction for the school. Staff working at all levels share this strongly and their committed and effective teamwork is ensuring that this is truly an improving school. The school has recently begun to develop the role of subject leaders in monitoring and leading their areas. This is proceeding well, but they are not yet fully involved in for example, guiding their colleagues on how to provide the very best challenges for all pupils in their subjects. Although standards have dipped at times since the last inspection, when affected by previous turbulence in leadership and staffing, the school is succeeding in maintaining good achievement for its pupils. It has secured good improvement in tackling key issues from the last inspection and improving resources and planning for learning. This track record and the school's current vision and commitment show that it has a good capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that expectation and challenge for the most able pupils are sufficient for them to always achieve as well as they can.
- Increase the contribution of subject managers in monitoring and leading their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Recent improvements are having positive effects. In the Nursery class, children quickly improve upon their initially weak speaking, reading and writing skills and continue their good progress in the Reception class. This results in them being at expected levels in all areas when they enter Year 1. In 2006

standards were below average in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, although pupils' progress was satisfactory. Following improvements to teaching, the current pupils are now making good progress. This is reflected in their standards, which are coming close to average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The standards of Year 6 pupils are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. This shows good progress because the current Year 6 pupils entered Year 3 with below average standards, before the impact of improvements to teaching had been felt. Pupils' weakest areas are in developing their ideas in writing and in using their knowledge to solve mathematical problems. As a result of improvements to teaching, they are becoming better, however. The impact is shown for example in some recent good writing in Year 6 exercise books. The most able pupils do not achieve significantly less well than their classmates. This is because they make good use of their learning opportunities and use their own initiative. However, because challenge for these pupils is not consistently high, their achievement is not always as high as their abilities and interest deserve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils help their teachers by working hard in lessons, with just a few occasionally less involved. They live active lives. Sports clubs are fully subscribed. Pupils are proud of their successes in competition with other schools but, as one said, 'We don't always have to win. It's great just to take part.' They are currently showing their interest in healthy diet by working together to produce a multicultural recipe book for healthy meals, with ideas from meals that they eat at home. Pupils know why it is important to understand the main risks to their health and safety. Some have shown their commitment to this by suggesting through the school council ways in which their understanding could be made even better, by for example learning more about the harmful effects of drugs. Pupils enthusiastically contribute to the life of the school through carrying out a wide range of roles, such as school councillors and play leaders and peer mediators. They often come up with good ideas of their own. These include ways such as the recipe book to raise funds for good causes, or for making their school a better place, such as painting a mural to brighten up the Foundation Stage outside area. Pupils' good progress in their key subjects prepares them well for their futures. This is added to by pupils' good response to encouragement to recognise and develop their own talents. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Because they listen to each other and respect each others' views, they contribute fully to the school as a harmonious community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan a good variety of stimulating activities that interest pupils and encourage them to be enthusiastic learners. They question pupils well. This encourages them to develop their answers, which is good practice for their speaking and writing skills. Planning is usually effective in ensuring that tasks are appropriate for all. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that all pupils who need extra help quickly receive this. Teachers do not clearly enough identify what pupils are expected to learn by carrying out their tasks, however. This has the biggest impact for the most able pupils in not ensuring that their expectations and challenge are always as high as they could be. Marking is regular and encouraging, but does not always give guidance on how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides well for English, mathematics and science, so that pupils achieve well in these. Resources and planning for information and communication technology (ICT), weak at the time of the last inspection, are now much better. Pupils now have good opportunities to enhance their work in all subjects and to improve their ICT standards. Provision for physical education benefits from involvement with the borough's School Sports Programme, so that pupils can have expert coaching. French is taught in Years 3 and 4 and plans are in hand to improve provision further by extending this to Years 5 and 6. The personal, social, health and emotional learning (PSHE) programme makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The provision of interesting activities in and outside the classroom promotes pupils' involvement and enjoyment. Good, very well attended clubs, providing a range of sporting and creative activities, contribute strongly to this. So also do themed weeks. Pupils themselves suggested a careers week. This is now an annual event, called 'Step Into the Wider World'. The school is introducing some good activities for the most able pupils, including a writer's workshop and mathematics challenge, which benefit from specialist provision from the local schools cluster.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All childcare procedures are diligently and efficiently carried out. Health education programmes teach pupils well how to care for themselves. Links with a range of outside agencies secure effective support for vulnerable children. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning to speak English are carefully monitored to ensure that they receive the most appropriate individual support. The school has seen the improvement of systems for tracking and supporting pupils' progress as key to raising their standards. New systems have been recently introduced. Although their fullest impact has yet to be felt, they are already proving effective in ensuring that each pupil's progress is monitored regularly. The school is able to choose from a range of support strategies the ones that best suit each pupil.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leadership and staffing have undergone considerable turbulence in recent years. The present situation is however, one of stability, high morale and a unified and effective focus on improvement. The school is aware of the need to increase the role of subject managers in monitoring and leading their areas. It is working effectively towards this. The school's commitment to including all pupils is shown by its recent appointment of an inclusion officer. This is already proving effective in ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those at an early stage of learning to speak English are as fully involved and achieving as well as their classmates. Governors are well informed, strongly committed and are playing a prominent role in leading the school forward. Systematic self evaluation has given the school a good awareness of its strengths and the areas in which it needs to improve further. Good account is taken of guidance from local authority advisers.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you and I am grateful for the help you gave by talking to me and letting me look at your work.

Your school is good. You make good progress in your work. This is because teachers plan good, interesting lessons and you work hard. The only parts of your work which have not been quite so good as the others were your writing and the way you use what you know to solve numeracy problems. Your teachers have thought about this and have started to give you more help. I could see that this is already helping you to become better in both your writing and your numeracy. Those of you in the Nursery and Reception soon learn to work together and quickly become better at speaking, reading and writing.

Some of you told me that you feel well cared for and safe. I could see that the adults do care for you very well. Also they teach you how to care for yourselves by being safe and healthy. You join in with this very well. I think that your idea for making a book of healthy meals, using your ideas from home is great. You also join in well with all the clubs. Although you do well in competitions with other schools, some of you told me that it is just as important to take part. This is a really good way to think about it.

Your headteacher and the staff have worked hard to improve the school. They know how to make it even better. I have asked them to make sure they do two things. The first is that they always check that those of you who can manage more difficult work do as well as you can. The second is to share out the tasks more when they check how well the school is doing and think of improvements. This is to make sure that all the staff hear each other's good ideas for making things even better.

Well done to you all and very best wishes for the future.

George Rayner Lead Inspector