



St Joseph's RC Junior Infant and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 105719
Local Authority Oldham
Inspection number 287313
Inspection date 15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Brenda McIntosh

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Oldham Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Shaw, Oldham
Age range of pupils	3-11		Lancashire OL2 8SZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 847218
Number on roll (school)	241	Fax number	01706 847218
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Anthony Drinkwater
		Headteacher	Mr Andrew Dickinson
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
3-11	15 November 2006	287313

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is an average sized school. It is highly regarded and serves areas of mixed social and economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of pupils are from a White British background and no pupils are learning English as an additional language. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school has recently been re-awarded Investors in People status. It is an official provider for Initial Teacher Training. The school has been awarded the title of Football Association School of the Year for both Greater Manchester and the North West of England for the last two years in succession.

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 is an outstanding school because it enables pupils to achieve far beyond national expectations both in their academic and their personal development. It has a strong Catholic character and fulfils its aim exceedingly well in helping every pupil to reach their full potential within a happy family community.

There are a number of significant reasons why the school is so successful. High on the list is the strong emphasis it places on how well all pupils learn and challenging them to 'aim high'. Motivation is a key word in this school and pupils and staff aspire successfully to greater things. Pupils are alert and actively involved in their learning and the vast majority participate eagerly in the tremendous range of additional activities the school offers them. In addition, and perhaps of most importance, pupils love coming to school; they are happy and feel valued. Pupils' comments reflect their belief in themselves that they can do well; as one pupil said, 'We shoot for the moon and aim high but if we miss we land among the stars.' Parents' support for the school is outstanding; many took time to write why they think the school is unique and how they feel so privileged and proud that their children are educated in a place where everyone feels important and that they really matter.

Pupils make outstanding progress during their time in school. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are typically as expected for their age and reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievement is outstanding and they reach high standards year on year. In 2005 the results at the end of Year 6 placed the school second overall in England and Wales. A culture of 'work hard and play hard' is embedded in the school and this pays off. All pupils are fully challenged to do their best and receive full support from their parents in their learning. The school's capacity to provide timely intervention for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent and results in these pupils making remarkable progress. They often reach standards beyond those expected for their age.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Progress throughout the school is outstanding and attainment has remained consistently high for a number of years under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher because all aspects of the school's work are rigorously checked. Leaders at all levels, including governors, play their part in the success of the school. Leadership responsibilities are distributed fairly and effectively, with high levels of accountability and thorough monitoring of staff performance. A high priority is given to professional development of the staff's leadership qualities: so much so that a number move on to promotions in other schools. All staff are highly motivated and contribute effectively in providing the best for each individual pupil. Many comments received from various sources praised the staff and how 'they go that extra mile in their willingness to help the children succeed'. This is shown in the way so many staff give their time to provide such an exciting programme of extra-curricular activities that caters for a wide range of interests and inspires pupils of all ability to do well.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding because precise emphasis is placed on pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and as a result pupils are highly engaged, happy in their learning and achieve exceptionally well. Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and is central to their achieving so well. In the Foundation Stage children get off to a flying start because of the excellent provision. Pupils are appreciative of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. They feel safe in school and are confident that their teachers will help them if they have a problem. Pupils are exceptionally polite and well mannered and as they grow older gain an impressive ability to talk openly to adults in a very mature way.

The curriculum is outstanding because it meets the needs of all pupils and promotes high academic achievement and outstanding personal development and well-being. It offers a wide range of rich and diverse learning opportunities. Good use of information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school aids teaching and learning; this leads to pupils' high interest in lessons and good standards in their ICT skills. The school is reviewing how subjects such as history, geography and art are planned and is currently developing further links across the curriculum incorporating these subjects. Currently, links between subjects are not always exploited to the full so that pupils can usefully apply skills learned in one area of the curriculum to help them do better in another.

After the last inspection the school was left with no issues to address. Nevertheless, rigorous self-evaluation has resulted in significant development since then and the school has grown from strength to strength. The school's proven track record means it is exceptionally well placed to maintain and improve further the high quality education it offers. It provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities to use the skills learned in one subject to achieve better in others.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Boys and girls and those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all do equally well and make outstanding progress throughout the school. Children enter Nursery with skills that are as expected for their age. They achieve very well in the Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. Pupils build well on this very good start and make excellent progress to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 2. Standards in writing are particularly high due to the successful focus on this area of the school's development. By the end of Year 6 standards are exceptionally high. In 2006 high standards and achievement were maintained.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

When pupils sum up their thoughts about the school they use words such as 'fantastic', 'marvellous' and 'brilliant'. They say they are never bored because they have so much to do. There is no wonder that attendance levels are excellent because pupils are so keen to attend. During the inspection the school was presented with an award for having the best attendance within the local authority. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop a great understanding for the values, beliefs and needs of others and support a wide range of charities and local groups in the community. They show a high level of respect for adults and each other. Pupils choose healthy food and enjoy their school meals. Many take part in a number of sporting activities in school and in tournaments against other schools. The vast array of trophies demonstrates their achievements and skills in a range of sporting events. The Football Association award has helped develop pupils' positive attitudes towards cooperation and teamwork. Pupils' contribution to the school community is excellent. They take on a range of responsible roles such as house captains, buddies and road safety officers. Pupils flourish at the school and by the time they leave they are academically and socially adept and exceedingly well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Lessons are planned effectively to target the different levels of ability and build on previous learning. They are varied and imaginative and as a result pupils' interest and engagement is high. Teaching assistants are well trained to meet pupils' specific learning needs and work closely alongside the teachers, contributing effectively to pupils' learning. Relationships are strong; pupils respond to the teachers' praise and encouragement with an eagerness to do well. Pupils like the way teachers use different methods and exciting approaches to make learning fun. Targets are used very well to help pupils improve their work. Pupils say the homework really helps them to do well because it extends what they have learned in class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils' basic skills, their personal development and enjoyment of learning are considerably enhanced by the outstanding curriculum. It provides pupils with a wide range of diverse learning experiences and additional activities. This includes learning to speak French, maypole dancing, music, sport, two residential visits: the list is vast and activities are suited to meet pupils' varying needs and interests. Boys' and girls' football teams are very successful. Writing and ICT are used widely across the curriculum. However, pupils do not yet have enough opportunities to see that subjects

are linked closely, or to use the skills learned in one subject to help them achieve better in others. In the Foundation Stage, activities are carefully planned to develop children's confidence and independence, preparing them very well for Year 1.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils say that one of the best things they like about the school is the way the teachers help them. They feel well cared for and safe in school because there is always an adult on hand to help them if they need it. Pupils are taught how to keep safe and were quick to point out that although bullying is not an issue in school they would know how to deal with it should incidents occur. Child protection procedures and those for safeguarding pupils are in place and meet current requirements. Health and safety arrangements are robust. Pupils with individual needs are quickly identified and full guidance and support are provided. The targets on their individual education plans are very focused and help them to make outstanding progress. Pupils know how well they are doing with their work and assess their understanding effectively using a traffic light system. Parents cannot praise the school enough for the way it helps their children settle into Nursery and quickly helps them to gain confidence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Through the excellent quality of its leadership the school has gained a very high reputation in the community. A key reason for this is that self-evaluation is a rigorous process through which the school identifies what it could do better and then takes decisive action to keep the school moving forward. Governors are very effective in providing challenge and support and play a full part in shaping the school's direction. For example, they have helped enormously in bringing about improvements to the learning environment and recruiting high calibre staff. There is a strong team spirit where everyone's contribution is valued. The professional development of all staff is closely linked to the staff's own development and maintaining high achievement. For example, specialist training provided for teaching assistants has contributed to the outstanding progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school draws on a wide range of expertise through a wealth of partnerships to improve its provision and enhance pupils' learning experiences. The school makes an effective contribution to teacher training, as demonstrated by its high quality provision and excellent practice in the professional development of its own staff.

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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

Thank you for giving me such a warm welcome when I visited your school recently. I had a busy enjoyable day and appreciated the chance to talk with some of you about what it is like to be a pupil at St Joseph's. I would like to share with you some of the things I found out. I think that your school is an outstanding place in which to learn. Here are some of my reasons. Some of you told me that you are never bored because you always have so much to do. I must agree you are always busy. I like the way you enjoy learning and take part in the tremendous range of exciting learning experiences and extra-curricular activities. The number of trophies you have on display is impressive. One of the best things I like about your school is the way in which the staff motivate you, encourage you to aim high and help you to be successful. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is impeccable. When I visited your classes you were always working hard and were fully engrossed in your activities. The teachers make your lessons interesting and help you to reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time you leave at the end of Year 6. You do remarkably well. The headteacher and all the other staff look after you extremely well and are constantly looking for ways to make things even better for you. If you think of anything that could be better then tell the school councillors so they can pass on your suggestions.

To help you get even more enjoyment out of learning I have asked your teachers to make interesting links between the different subjects, particularly when they are planning subjects such as history and geography. This will help you to see the connections between subjects and you will be able to use the skills learned in one subject to help you do even better in another. Some of your parents hoped that in the short time I spent at St Joseph's I would get the opportunity to see what makes it so unique. I hope that when they read the report they can see that I did.

My very best wishes for the future and your continued success.