

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105965
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	287380
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Robinson

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	145
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr K Hogg
Headteacher	Miss M Ambrose
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002
School address	St Joseph's Drive Ordsall Salford Lancashire M5 3JP
Telephone number	0161 872 1062
Fax number	0161 921 1892

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. This is an area of high and prolonged unemployment and over 60% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The premises suffer significantly from criminal trespass and vandalism. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average.

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 Primary is an outstanding school which has improved extremely well since its last inspection. It was identified nationally as being amongst the 100 top performing schools based on the most improved schools over the period 2002 to 2005. The key strength is the first-rate leadership and management of the school. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. She is supported extremely well by governors and a high performing staff team who are enthusiastic, capable and dedicated to providing the best for the pupils in their care.

The achievement of all groups of pupils from entry to school to the end of Year 6 is outstanding. From a well below average starting point children make consistently fast progress. As a result, standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. In the Foundation Stage, (Nursery and Reception) children get off to a wonderful start because of outstanding provision. Good and often better teaching throughout the school enables pupils to make outstanding progress in their learning. Pupils respond extremely well to the teaching by working hard. Members of staff provide exceptionally good help to all groups of pupils. Lessons move at a quick pace and time is used well because pupils are very interested in their work. The marking of pupils' work clearly identifies what they have done well and what they must do to improve. The very good systems in place to monitor pupils' progress from the Nursery to Year 6 are used extremely well to check their progress. The curriculum meets the needs of all. It is very effective with a strong and successful emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills.

Pupils respond exceptionally well to the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Relationships are harmonious between pupils as well as between pupils and staff. Pupils are respectful, polite and are proud of their school. They behave extremely well in the classroom and around school. Year 6 pupils report that 'there is no bullying.' Pupils enjoy and appreciate the wide range of after school activities. Pupils feel safe in the school building and trust all the adults they deal with. They have a thorough understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are well prepared for future learning because of their thorough acquisition of basic skills and their excellent attitudes to learning.

The leadership team, including governors, have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development though the school is rather modest in some of its judgements. However, increasingly major acts of vandalism are placing an excessive burden on the school's budget and staff time as well as limiting the further development of outdoor education. The vandalism threatens the school's outstanding capacity to continue to improve. The school provides outstanding value for money because accommodation, staffing and other resources are used extremely well to promote a high standard of education for pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the local authority, other agencies and the local community to find ways to eliminate vandalism.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve exceptionally well as they move through the school. The high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils, resulting in many reaching average standards by the time they leave the school.

Children in the Foundation Stage make rapid progress but, because of their low starting point, standards remain below average by the time they join Year 1. The increasing number of children joining the school learning English as an additional language quickly become fluent in English. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils continue to make excellent progress.

Standards by the end of Year 6 vary from year to year because of the small number of pupils in each year group. An improving trend in standards has resulted in most pupils reaching national expectations during the past few years. Standards in English, mathematics and science are similar, though pupils do particularly well in writing compared to pupils in other schools. For example, in writing in 2005, pupils' performance in the national tests at the higher level (Level 5) was the best in the local authority, which was a remarkable achievement. Standards of the present group of pupils in Year 6 remain average and they are on course to reach their appropriately challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils report that, 'they enjoy school and get a good education'. Attendance rates are broadly average. Pupils show an extremely positive attitude to their work which helps them to achieve exceptionally well. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary within the school and when outdoors. Pupils benefit from the wide range of physical activities available, as part of the curriculum, at playtimes and during out-of-school clubs. The 'Freddy Fit' club at the start of the school day, run by older pupils, is well attended. Pupils get on extremely well together and are very welcoming to new pupils, including those learning English as an additional language. Pupils are proud of their school. For example, the ecology group maintains a large exciting garden, though get a little dispirited when it is vandalised. As an older pupil stated, the way to improve the school would be to, 'Build a fence to stop vandalism.' Pupils are enthusiastic fund-raisers and support worthy causes, such as helping to provide two wells in Zimbabwe. The thorough grounding in basic skills prepares pupils well for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching is outstanding because it is consistently good and often better, resulting in pupils making excellent progress during their time at the school. Lessons are planned very well to interest pupils of all levels of ability. Classrooms are stimulating places to learn. Resources are used well. For example, in the Nursery, through the first-hand experience of making vegetable soup children gained a good understanding of the different foods they were using. Pupils are encouraged by staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world by working outdoors. Strong emphasis on the presentation of work results in pupils producing high-quality neat work. Teaching assistants, the learning mentor and governors provide valued help to teachers to hasten the learning of all groups of pupils. The pace of lessons is fast and

teachers' excellent management of pupils ensures a calm purposeful learning atmosphere. Information and communication technology is used very well to develop learning as well as to assess individuals' successes. The marking of pupils' work is consistently good throughout the school. It is celebratory as well as clearly identifying points for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

An outstanding curriculum is rooted firmly on developing key life skills, particularly in literacy. The curriculum is enriched and broadened extremely well to promote the pupils' creativity as a way to develop literacy skills in a range of subjects. Italian is taught in Years 3 to 6. The excellent provision for music is wide ranging and is freely accessible for all pupils. All pupils learn to play musical instruments, beginning with a chance to play violin in the Nursery before playing other musical instruments from Year 3. The school orchestras provide wonderful opportunities to perform as a group and for others. Educational visits, visitors to the school and a very good range of extra-curricular activities are used very effectively to provide added interest to learning. Parents report that, 'Children get up at the crack of dawn on trip days.' In the Foundation Stage, exciting activities both indoors and outdoors stimulate children to learn at a brisk pace.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school gives the highest priority to learners' health and safety, exercising vigilance at all times with zero tolerance of bullying and racism. Procedures to safeguard children are in place. Health and safety and risk assessment procedures promote a safe environment. Parents and pupils agree that the school looks after its pupils very well. Support for vulnerable pupils is extremely good. The tracking of pupils' progress is thorough and is used very well to assist pupils to achieve outstandingly. Pupils who are not making expected progress are clearly identified at all levels of attainment and additional support is given to speed up their learning. The pastoral care of pupils is exceptional because the headteacher and staff, including the learning mentor, know all the children and the families very well. All pupils are nurtured and thrive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The high performing team of senior managers, teachers and support staff is led and managed exceptionally well by the headteacher and the governing body. As a result, the school successfully meets its mission statement to help every child to live 'life to the full'. The academic achievement and development of self-esteem of all pupils are of paramount importance and the leadership are constantly striving to improve the provision for pupils. The commitment of the staff and governors is excellent. For example, the chair of governors, together with other governors, is exceptionally proactive in seeking funding for school improvement as well as providing many enrichment opportunities for children. Staff do not allow mindless destruction of outdoor facilities and damage to the building to deflect them from providing the best education possible for the pupils. Financial management is extremely good and resources are deployed very effectively. The school's allocation of funding is managed efficiently to provide a very broad curriculum, extensive learning opportunities and good staffing ratios. Excellent partnerships

with other educational establishments and outside agencies enhance pupils' learning. Parents are highly appreciative of the education provided and report that, 'their children enjoy school, feel safe and are well cared for'.

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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?	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	3
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	3
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.

Annex A

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

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School, Salford, M5 3JP

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and being so polite and friendly. I enjoyed my visit and I want to share with you what I thought about your school.

From our discussions, I know that you are proud of the school and consider it is a great place to be. Well, I agree. Your school is an outstanding school because the leadership and management of the headteacher and other staff are exceptionally good. As a result, you make excellent progress in your learning and reach nationally expected standards. Your personal development is outstanding because you enjoy school and all get on so well together. Your behaviour is superb and this helps your learning, so keep it up. You are cared for extremely well by staff and this helps you feel safe at school. You have many opportunities to take part in activities that will keep you healthy. Your very positive attitudes to learning assist your progress. Teachers plan exciting lessons which capture your interest and enthusiasm for learning. The ecology group does a super job in the outdoor garden.

Your headteacher and governors have detailed plans for the future to ensure that your school continues to provide an outstanding education for all of you. However, a lot of vandalism is threatening the continual improvement of the school so I have asked the school to find ways to stop this taking place. I am sure you will make suggestions to the headteacher and help the school to stop the damage to its premises.

I am sure that you will continue to help your teachers and the headteacher by attending regularly, behaving very well, working hard and doing your best.

I appreciated talking to you about your work and watching you learn. I wish you well for the future.