

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108265
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wakefield
<b>Inspection number</b>	288058
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Giles

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Ramskill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Darren Redfern
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Newgate Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 4AA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01977 723555
<b>Fax number</b>	01977 723557

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Joseph's is an average size primary school of Voluntary Aided Catholic status situated in the centre of Pontefract. The proportion of pupils who do not speak English as their first language is low, but has been rising steadily during the present academic year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including statements of special educational need, is below the national average, but does vary each year. The school has an Investors in People award and the Basic Skills Mark and works closely within the Wakefield Catholic Partnership in many facets of its work. The headteacher has just completed his first year at the school.

## 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. At the heart of its success is its happy atmosphere, underpinned by the outstanding way staff promote pupils' personal development and learning. Belief of the uniqueness of each pupil and understanding of each of them is reflected in the school's aims and displayed in every classroom. The school's excellent care and support for each individual is reflected, for example, in the outstanding progress made by pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who do not speak English as their first language. Support teachers work very effectively with the growing number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school provides for their children. A very high number of them returned inspection questionnaires, all of which agreed that their children are well cared for and that they make good progress.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils support each other extremely well, show great concern for those who have problems and have a very good understanding of the place of the Catholic Church in their lives. They thoroughly enjoy attending mass on a weekly basis and are proud to be part of the St Joseph's Catholic community. Pupils have a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles, enhanced in well planned lessons and recently as an integral part of an application for the Healthy Schools Award.

Children start Nursery with skills that are broadly average. They make a sound start in the Foundation Stage, although the use of assessment to identify their standards when they start school has been insecure and has led to an uncertainty about the progress they have made by the time they start Year 1. However, overall standards have been above average and pupils' progress has been good in English, mathematics and science since the last inspection. Standards overall are above average by the end of Year 6. Recent changes in the way the school tracks the progress of individuals mean it is now addressing successfully the issue of standards in writing being a little lower than those in other subjects. As a result it is further maximising the good progress pupils make, especially by improving standards in boys' writing. Much of this success is due to the sharing of some outstanding teaching practices that are especially used to enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make excellent progress. However, improvements in standards of writing are not yet being achieved consistently throughout the school.

Teaching is good. Pupils are happy, highly motivated and achieve well. There is a strong caring ethos within classrooms and pupils respond eagerly to meet the personal targets and challenges set for them. The school provides a good, well balanced curriculum and has been particularly successful in increasing the range of out-of-school activities and special themed events. Pupils talk enthusiastically of additional opportunities to enjoy sport, drama and music. Good progress is being made in the Foundation Stage to improve access for pupils to all essential areas of learning. Pupils also talk enthusiastically about the extremely good care they receive and that teachers and other adults always help them when needed. They particularly like to be given additional responsibilities and describe how they support each other in the playground. The school council meets its responsibilities well and its members are immensely proud of their roles.

The school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement. In a short space of time the new headteacher has successfully introduced rigorous self-evaluation procedures, such as those relating to the new National Literacy Strategy, and new Foundation Stage practices. These are

monitored very carefully to check their impact on pupils' achievements. As a result the school is successfully building on present strengths to improve standards and achievements further. The headteacher is well supported by other staff who ensure that prioritised developments, such as raising standards in writing, are consistently applied throughout the school. There has been a concerted effort to enrich pupils' learning more by involving their parents and carers more in the life of the school and by making better use of visiting experts and coaches.

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

- Improve standards in writing consistently across the school.
- Improve the quality of assessment practices in the Foundation Stage to give teachers a more accurate view of children's starting points and what they should be achieving.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Apart from a slight dip in 2005, due to a significant number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, overall standards in both Years 2 and 6 have been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. Good achievement in speaking and reading, mathematics and science have been a special feature of these results. The school identified that some pupils do not achieve quite as well in writing. Due to recent curriculum initiatives, children in the Foundation Stage are now acquiring language skills more in line with their abilities because play, exploration and directed activities focus better on communication and literacy development. Improvements in writing are becoming more consistent across the school as initiatives are implemented, Year 6 providing a successful example of this. Gifted and talented pupils are involved in purposeful extra-curricular activities to further stretch their abilities and as a result they achieve well.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils talk intelligently about the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including eating their fruit snacks in the afternoon and opportunities for exercise in a range of sporting clubs. They are particularly proud of their long-standing successes in sporting events, especially swimming. They feel safe in the school environment and quickly point out the complete lack of bullying. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the above average attendance figures.

There are many opportunities in and out of lessons where pupils sensitively reflect on their lives as well as the feelings and achievements of others. Pupils are proud of recent initiatives to create safe sanctuaries within the playground involving 'buddies' to help those with problems. Lesson observations showed very high self-esteem and personal confidence amongst pupils resulting in brilliant listening skills and also excellent collaborative group work. The school promotes multi-faith awareness through its religious education programme and is actively embracing the growing multicultural characteristics of its pupils. Pupils also talk of recent initiatives that value personal achievement in special assemblies and many parents comment how these have further enhanced the ethos of the school. Key life skills are well developed by residential experiences.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good. Support teachers are very effectively used when specific groups and individuals are targeted for help, often resulting in excellent progress. The beginnings of lessons are purposeful and efficient because teachers make clear the objectives of lessons. Pupils respond well to their personal targets, for example in a mathematics lesson excellent variation in questioning enabled pupils of all abilities to make good progress in solving subtraction problems. There is a calm learning atmosphere in all lessons, characterised by outstanding behaviour and pupils' striving to do their best. The school has recently developed rigorous assessment procedures to record achievement and has made it a priority to use these to further develop teaching and learning strategies. For example, this was seen in an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson planned with the use of exceptional resources and tasks to inspire pupils, especially boys, to write more productively. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, especially in addressing the need to improve the pace of progress in some aspects of children's language acquisition.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of all its pupils well in Years 1 to 6. In the Foundation Stage it is satisfactory with a recent improvement in balancing the curriculum for all areas of learning and taking further account of how young children learn best. New developments in personal, social and health education are enabling pupils to gain a good understanding of healthy lifestyle issues and their understanding of citizenship. The school is developing its curriculum provision, via a thematic approach, especially to further enable pupils to write in differing styles across a range of topics and subjects. Good provision is made for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills and to use them very effectively to support their learning in other areas. Numeracy teaching is significantly aiding pupils' thinking and problem-solving skills and the learning of French adds to pupils' cultural and linguistic experiences. The expanding range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors provides excellent opportunities for pupils to extend their enjoyment of learning and to develop new skills and talents.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff have developed good links with outside agencies and local partner schools so pupils' learning and personal needs are very well met. Child protection procedures are in place. School actions to improve the learning environment as children transfer into the Reception and Year 1 classes are appropriate to further improve rates of progress and well-being. Praise for pupils' social and academic achievements is very apparent, which in turn promotes excellent personal attitudes and a solid preparation for the next stages in learning. 'Circle time' in lessons is adding a further useful dimension to support systems. Teachers are aware of how well pupils are doing and set challenging targets in lessons. As a consequence, pupils know how to improve their work and what they need to learn next. Parents are very pleased with levels of communication, especially related to their children's progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has perceptively recognised the right direction for the school and has the full support of the staff, governing body and the local authority. Recent actions to enliven literature throughout the school and to make pupils more aware of writing for a purpose have been based on a strong commitment to equal opportunities and raising the achievement of all. There is a positive team spirit where all contributions are valued. Self-evaluation is accurate and is leading to further improvement and higher achievement because of the appropriateness of development planning. The inspection judgements match those of the school in every aspect of its work. Staff professional development is prioritised highly and new skills are shared productively, for example when subject leaders introduce new initiatives in their areas. New governing body members are increasingly becoming more involved in self-evaluatory aspects of school life with a remit to provide support and challenge more in line with recent monitoring initiatives to move the school even further forward. The school is providing good value for money.

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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	<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>	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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	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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
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 Catholic Primary School, Pontefract, WF8 4AA

It was very nice of you to greet me so kindly when I came to your school recently to see how well you, and your school, are doing. Throughout my stay it was quite obvious that you are proud of your school and that you make good contributions to making it a happy and safe place to learn. You will be pleased to hear that I agree with your views and judge St Joseph's to be a good school.

I enjoyed talking to you and visiting your lessons to watch you learn and you should be very proud of your excellent behaviour and positive attitudes. I agree with you when you say everyone gets on really well, that you make good friends and that your lessons can be very interesting and also that you enjoy your learning.

These are some of the best things your school does.

- The very good way your headteacher and other staff look after you.
- The way your teachers help you learn and the good progress you are making.
- Making sure you behave well and create good friendships.
- Encouraging you to be active in school life.
- Providing very many interesting activities for you to become involved in.

We have asked your teachers to improve some things to make your school an even better place to learn in. We have asked them to:

- help you improve your writing skills even more
- check more carefully on the things children in the Nursery and Reception classes can do when they start school.

Thank you for helping me with my work and for being such good hosts. I hope you continue to be proud of your good school.