



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110477
Local Authority Buckinghamshire
Inspection number 288685
Inspection dates 12–13 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mary Summers

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Priory Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Chalfont St Peter
Age range of pupils	4–11		Gerrards Cross SL9 8SB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01753 887743
Number on roll (school)	415	Fax number	01753 892971
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr J Bates
		Headteacher	Mr A B Szwagrzak
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 12–13 September 2006	Inspection number 288685
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school draws pupils from an extensive area which includes a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. It has a higher proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including a small number from Traveller families, than found in most schools. The percentage of children with learning difficulties is relatively low. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

At the heart of this good school lie effective teamwork and a commitment to Catholic ethos and values. Consequently, pupils' personal development is outstanding and has a direct bearing on the outstanding standards they achieve in English, mathematics and science at the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils are proud of their school and recognise how the excellent examples of adults help them to become confident, independent learners with strong moral values. 'Teachers respect us,' noted one boy, describing his influence in school development through the pupil council.

Effective systems have been introduced to increase teachers' accountability for their own performance and that of their pupils. They have accepted them readily, showing their commitment to pupils and the school community alike. Pupils at St Joseph's achieve well. Firm foundations are laid in the Reception class, where children benefit greatly from stimulating teaching and exciting activities. They build well on these as they move through the school. More able pupils achieve exceptionally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from Traveller families, make good progress because of the individual care and support provided by teachers.

Teaching and learning are good, especially in English, mathematics and science where teachers present lessons skilfully and with great enthusiasm. In other subjects, lessons are sometimes not as effective because they are not planned as thoroughly. The school has already begun to address this by adopting a new approach to planning. The introduction of a new tier of middle management is also beginning to tackle the situation and to increase teachers' effectiveness. This recent improvement is the result of perceptive and good leadership and management. Within a short time, the headteacher has gained an accurate view of performance and built a strong team capable and willing to tackle any areas for development.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of experiences offered. They know how to keep safe and healthy, and develop a strong sense of citizenship through firm links with the parish and wider community. Sport and music have high profiles and pupils hone these skills to a high standard. Pupils' substantial success in English and mathematics linked to their outstanding personal development stand them in very good stead for their future education and beyond.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lesson planning and teaching in all subjects matches the same high levels as in English, mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start in Reception at levels which are generally above those expected for their age. They make good progress and, by the time they start Year 1, many exceed the

goals set for them in all areas of learning. Achievement in personal, social and emotional development is especially high.

Pupils build well on this early learning as they move through the school. Results in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been consistently high in recent years. Provisional test results for English in Year 6 in 2006 suggest that the slight downward trend in previous years has been reversed as a result of the school's additional support for some underachieving pupils. Pupils respond with great enthusiasm to the challenging targets set by their teachers. Those with learning difficulties and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Traveller pupils, all make good progress. They are able to take a full part in lessons because of effective support from teachers and support assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent. It is based upon the school's Catholic ethos. One boy who had just returned to school following a serious accident was welcomed warmly by pupils and staff. 'We offered many prayers for you,' explained the teacher, 'and they were answered'. Pupils talk proudly of their achievements in meeting their targets and performing in end of term concerts. They show good levels of enjoyment of their lessons, responding eagerly to teachers' questions and sharing ideas. They help one another readily as Playground Buddies and quickly befriend new pupils. Attendance is average and improving. The school is working hard with parents to avoid holidays being taken during term time.

Pupils are keen to accept responsibility and take their roles seriously. They appreciate the pupil council, seeing it as, 'really useful if you want something to go forward.' They feel safe, confident in the knowledge that problems are dealt with quickly. In developing good healthy lifestyles, most are aware of eating sensibly and many have been instrumental in making changes to school menus. They know about the value of physical exercise, many taking part in the sports on offer outside the normal school day. Pupils have an excellent grounding for the future through gaining basic skills and becoming valued members of the school and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are skilful at planning and delivering lessons in English, mathematics and science. They make it very clear what they expect and the pupils respond eagerly, confident that their efforts will be valued. 'I want you to come up with three questions using some of those question words on the board,' instructed a Year 2 teacher during a literacy lesson. Pupils set about the task enthusiastically, quickly noting down their ideas and sharing them with each other. Teachers engage pupils' interest through their

own enthusiasm and by using a varied range of teaching methods. Pupils in Year 6 assumed the role of a character from the book they were studying to enable them to consider events from the author's perspective. The teacher's probing questions made them search the text for evidence to substantiate their views. They were completely involved in the lesson and learned a great deal.

Planning for lessons in some other subjects is sometimes not as effective as in English, mathematics and science. In some lessons, teachers do not always consider and make it clear to pupils exactly what they want them to learn and this hampers their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum, including that in Foundation Stage, is good. It enables all pupils to achieve well and develop their capabilities through stimulating, relevant learning experiences. In Years 3 to 6, English and mathematics are taught in sets according to ability and this works well as the work provides different levels of challenge. However, planning in other subjects is not always as sharply focused. Music specialists provide instrumental tuition and the school orchestra plays at school at community events. Focus weeks give pupils opportunities to learn in a more practical way. In African Week, they experienced different foods and took part in African dance and singing. French is taught in Years 3 to 6 and the eldest pupils are able to use their language skills during the annual trip to France. The school nurse and community police officer visit regularly to teach pupils how to keep safe and healthy. Firm links between school and church contribute to pupils' growing sense of citizenship.

The quality and range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and helps pupils become confident and responsible individuals. A wide range of physical activities, including rugby, volleyball and gymnastics is offered and, as a result, sport is a strength of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The environment is warm and welcoming for pupils. Staff present excellent role models which influence the way pupils respond to each other. Any incident of unacceptable behaviour is dealt with quickly and exclusions are low. Regular checks are carried out to ensure pupils remain safe. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle and places restrictions on certain foods, which has an impact on the choices pupils make. Awards for citizenship and sportsmanship are designed to build pupils' confidence and prepare them well for the future.

Pupils are well supported in class, especially in English and mathematics where individual targets are set. They get good advice about what they need to do to improve. The school has introduced new procedures to check pupils' progress and these highlight any pockets of underachievement. Last year for instance, pupils who had not made enough progress received extra help which enabled them to catch up. Those with

learning difficulties are well supported in class and small groups. Teachers plan work which helps them move on at a good pace.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

In a relatively short space of time, the headteacher has built a strong team of staff and improved many aspects of the school's work. His high aspirations for pupils and staff have been at the root of many innovations. Teachers are now closely supported by a new tier of middle managers who are closely responsible for helping to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' performance. However, these managers are new and, whilst they are enthusiastic and very committed to school improvement, the impact of their work has yet to be seen.

Informative monitoring systems provide senior staff and governors with an accurate picture of the school's work. These effective innovations have led to clear thinking about how to tackle areas for development, for example the successful work done to address the dip in English standards. Governors provide outstanding support as well as being influential in shaping developments. They carry out their roles extremely well and keep a good check on how the school is meeting its targets. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue to improve in the future.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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	1
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?	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	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	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?	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.

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	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

We want to say a big thank you for your warm welcome and for sharing with us your views about the school. The other inspectors and I thoroughly enjoyed watching you in lessons and chatting with you in the dining room and around the school. Everything we saw and heard convinced us that you go to a good school.

Your school has several strengths.

- You are growing up as confident, extremely well-behaved young people who enjoy learning and know how to keep safe and healthy.
- You do well in your work and reach very high standards by the time you leave.
- Adults listen to your ideas so that you can help school become a better place for everyone.
- Teachers and other adults take good care of you and give you help if you need it.
- The people in charge of your school know what they need to do to make it even better.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to improve one aspect of school life.

- Make sure that lessons in other subjects are planned as well as they are in English, mathematics and science.

I know that you will continue to work hard and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Mary Summers

Lead Inspector