



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112335
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289250
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Sheila Mawer

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mountain View
School category	Voluntary aided		Cockermouth, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	4–11		CA13 0DG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01900 325932
Number on roll (school)	66	Fax number	01900 325932
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Michael Rooney
		Headteacher	Miss Teresa Readman
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006	Inspection number 289250
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school has three mixed age classes. It serves an urban area where social and economic features are mostly average. The number of pupils who leave or join the school other than at the start of Reception is very high. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the percentage having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although the school does not have its own Nursery, many children attend a private nursery on the same site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Joseph's is a satisfactory school with a strong Christian ethos. It makes good provision for pupils' personal development and provides a high standard of care. Pupils are really happy in school because of the strengths in relationships, which help to develop their confidence and self-esteem. As a result, pupils enjoy their education a great deal and parents praise the school highly for the way in which it 'welcomes our children with open arms'. The headteacher has earned the respect of parents and the local community. She has fostered a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff, leaders and governors, who have a growing understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, the school has an accurate evaluation of its effectiveness. Although the school is committed to improvement, standards are not yet high enough, particularly in writing. The school provides adequate value for money and has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Satisfactory quality and standards in Reception give children a positive start to their education. Steady progress continues as pupils move up the school, so that by Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. However, progress accelerates in Years 4 to 6 in all subjects as a result of good teaching and learning. Between Reception and Year 3, progress is satisfactory overall, although it is too slow in writing. This is because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and there are insufficient opportunities provided for pupils to practise and apply their writing skills across the subjects. Although teachers set targets for pupils' next steps in their learning, pupils are not yet fully involved, so that they are unclear about what they are expected to learn next or how well they are getting on.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is well enriched through a wealth of additional activities. Pupils' good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy is constantly improving through new initiatives. Regular sporting activities with other schools build strong teamwork skills. Learning French and taking part in fund-raising activities help prepare pupils for life after school. There are now more opportunities for art and craft in Reception and this is improving children's creative development. However, there remains a shortage of resources for outdoor provision and imaginative play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching from Reception to Year 3, to raise standards in all subjects, but particularly in writing, and extend opportunities for writing across the curriculum.
- Involve pupils' more in setting and reviewing their targets.
- Provide more resources in Reception to enrich children's outdoor and imaginative play.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who join the school at other times than in Reception, is satisfactory. Children enter school with wide variations in their skills, but overall they are similar to those typical for their age. Children make satisfactory progress, so that by the end of Reception, most are close to reaching the expected goals in all areas of learning, except in writing. This is because teaching is not focused enough on word building, shared writing and providing children with the skills and confidence needed to write independently.

Satisfactory progress continues, so that by the end of Year 2, pupils reach average standards in reading, mathematics and science. However, standards in writing are below average. Pupils spend too much time completing exercises that do not provide enough challenge or purpose, particularly to improve their fluency and writing skills.

In Years 4 to 6, pupils' progress is accelerated because of good quality teaching and the higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in writing. As a result, by the end of Year 6, standards are average overall, including in writing. Furthermore, a significant number of pupils gained the higher Level 5 in tests in 2006 in English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils love coming to school and are keen to learn. Attendance is satisfactory and improving further. Behaviour is good and pupils say that there is hardly any bullying because they all get on so well together. This results in a calm and caring school where pupils are very polite and welcoming, and so feel safe.

Pupils are fully aware of how to keep themselves healthy. Meals and snacks are mostly healthy, and the school is working towards the Healthy Schools Award. The school council is democratically elected and allows pupils to make a good contribution to school decision-making. Pupils say that improvements they have made to playtime facilities make breaks and lunchtimes more enjoyable occasions.

Cultural development has improved well since the last inspection. Pupils have a good understanding of religions, celebration of festivals, music, art and literature from around the world. Furthermore, a good range of visits and visitors deepen spiritual and cultural awareness of their own locality and prepare them for life in multi-cultural Britain.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good teaching in Years 4 to 6. Confident teachers plan lessons well. They make sure that information collected about what pupils already know and can do is used to identify those who need extra help. Effectively deployed teaching assistants provide good support for groups during independent work. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good and this encourages pupils to work hard.

Effective questioning, very clear instructions, the imaginative use of interactive whiteboards and high expectations are all particularly strong features of the teaching in Years 4 to 6. As a result, this captures pupils' attention throughout lessons, and they feel motivated and challenged to achieve well. In Reception through to Year 3, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough, particularly in writing. In these classes, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to use the skills gained from regular handwriting practice or to write for different purposes. Not enough meaningful links are made between writing and examples of good literature to help pupils to extend ideas and improve the structure of their writing. Marking has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. A good variety of educational visits, visitors, clubs and lessons in French are all making a good contribution to enriching the curriculum. This enhancement contributes well to the good progress pupils are making in their personal development. The significant partnership with the Schools Sports Co-ordinator and neighbouring schools ensures that pupils benefit from a good range of sporting activities and makes a good contribution to keeping them fit and healthy.

Although the curriculum in Reception has improved since the last inspection, there are limited opportunities for outdoor and imaginative play. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 extend their literacy skills well through science and other subjects; however, it is not as well developed in the other classes and, as a result, is affecting standards and progress in writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support overall are satisfactory. The school provides very good levels of pastoral care and support for pupils and their families. Parents appreciate that staff show 'an overwhelming degree of kindness and helpfulness towards our children'. All aspects of health and safety and child protection are in place, and good

links with outside agencies are particularly beneficial for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe and secure and know there is always someone to help and encourage them. Arrangements to support pupils when they join the school and when they prepare to move on to their next school are well thought out and very effective, so that pupils settle quickly into their new surroundings.

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The school has improved its monitoring of academic progress and is setting targets for pupils. However, pupils are not involved enough in setting and reviewing their progress and, therefore, do not have a clear understanding of how well they are doing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher balances her heavy teaching responsibilities well with those of leading and managing the school. Although she has ensured that satisfactory improvements have been made in most areas since the last inspection, higher standards for all pupils have not been achieved.

Subject leaders and governors are taking a more active role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. They are beginning to contribute to the school's improvement plan and to evaluate the impact of priorities on standards and progress. However, more rigour is needed to fully address the continued lack of challenge in some of the teaching to ensure higher standards are achieved, especially in writing. The promotion of equal opportunities within the school is strong, so that pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life and new pupils feel particularly welcomed. This is making a good contribution to pupils' good achievement in their personal development and enjoyment of school.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Mountain View

Cockermouth

Cumbria

CA13 0DG

14 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for helping me and making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you all about the things you enjoy doing in the school. You were very polite and friendly and I wish I could have stayed longer. I am pleased to tell you that I think St Joseph's is a satisfactory school and that your personal development is good and the care you receive is very good.

Here are the things I think are best about your school.

- The good progress you are making in Years 4 to 6.
- Your good behaviour and how you all work hard in lessons.
- Your relationships with each other are very good indeed.
- The way that all the adults in the school really care for you.
- How the school is helping you to know more about life in the wider world.
- The great number of visits, visitors and out of school activities that are planned for you and make your learning fun.

Here are the things that I think could be better.

- Those of you from Reception to Year 3 could do better, particularly in your writing and also your handwriting needs more care.
- You need to be more involved in setting and knowing your learning targets, so that you will know how well you are doing.
- Providing those of you in Reception with more equipment, so that you will have more opportunities to play, especially outside.

You can help your school get better by working hard to reach your targets so that you can help to set new and even harder ones. If you are in Reception through to Year 3, I hope you will take extra care to improve your writing, not just in your handwriting books. Those of you in Year 3 should be trying very hard with joined up writing.

Thank you again for being so helpful.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead Inspector