

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113491
<b>Local Authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	289650
<b>Inspection date</b>	5 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Clifton

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	115
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Winifred Chapple
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brendan Gill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 June 2001
<b>School address</b>	Chapel Street Devonport Plymouth PL1 4DJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 563185
<b>Fax number</b>	01752 563185

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school, situated near the centre of Plymouth. There are four classes containing pupils of mixed ages. Children come into the school with skills and abilities that vary from year to year but, taken collectively, are broadly in line with those expected for their age. The pupils in the school are mainly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

## 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 Catholic Primary School is a satisfactory school with several good features. It is improving because of good leadership and management. Leaders are tackling weaknesses firmly and this is improving the progress that pupils are making.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although pupils reach above average standards from a broadly average starting point in Reception. This anomaly is because pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2, where teaching is consistently well matched to pupils' needs, and consequently standards are above average by the end of Year 2. In other year groups, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children make a satisfactory start in Reception because they are happy and confident. They do not do any better because the activities provided for them are not always geared to their particular needs. In Years 3 to 6, where achievement is satisfactory for most, some pupils now make better progress and above average standards are maintained. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Pupils mostly enjoy lessons but say a few are rather dull. This results in some pupils losing interest and concentration. This is because teachers do not always vary their approaches or the way information is presented sufficiently well. Many lessons provide effectively for the different needs of pupils, giving them work which they find challenging. However, in some lessons this is not the case and, as a consequence, pupils find some of the work too easy.

The way the school nurtures its pupils is a strength. Staff are caring and the provision to support pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development is very strong. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils grow considerably in confidence and maturity as they move up through the school. They show great concern for each others' well-being. They have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. Whilst the pastoral care provided for pupils is good and they feel very safe in school, overall care guidance and support is only satisfactory because academic guidance is not as strong. Leaders have made improvements in helping the pupils understand how well they are doing. For example, in writing, pupils assess their work against criteria on 'learning ladders'. Most pupils use these well and can identify appropriate next steps for their learning. However, there are a minority of pupils who find this difficult and can only talk in very general terms about how they can improve. Teachers mark work regularly, but do not always explain what pupils need to do to move forward.

Leaders have worked effectively to develop many aspects of the curriculum, which is now good. The pupils are inspired by trips and visits and think, rightly, that the after-school clubs are good. There are good opportunities for them to practice and extend their writing skills in different subjects and they present their work well. Recent improvements such as opportunities to extend problem-solving skills in mathematics are now raising standards.

Links with parents are satisfactory and attendance at parents meeting is high. There are regular newsletters and the school seeks parents' views appropriately through questionnaires, although a few think that not enough is done to take account of their views. Pupils sum up their school well. They say, for example, that they 'like being given responsibilities' and all 'get on well together'.

### What the school should do to improve further

- improve teaching by ensuring that the needs of different pupils are consistently met and that teachers engage pupils through more varied approaches to learning

- improve pupils' understanding about how well they are doing and what they need to do to get better.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are above average. Pupils have made inconsistent progress through the school in the past. This is now being ironed out. Generally, children make satisfactory progress in the Reception Year, reaching the expected levels across the areas of learning.

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. In the 2006 Year 2 national tests, overall results were above average. Standards in reading and writing were above average and average in mathematics. Standards have fallen to average this year because of the higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have recently joined the school.

Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and improving. Year 6 test results show a downward trend from an above average position in 2002. In 2006, results were broadly average, although there were marked differences between subjects. English was above average, mathematics average and science below average. This year the trend has been reversed and current results show a significant improvement in all subjects.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress similar to other pupils in the school. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of education.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school's family community is reflected in the way in which pupils get on well with each other. Pupils say that assemblies are used well to help them understand the importance of good behaviour. Attributes such as kindness and consideration are fostered well though all of the school's work. Pupils enjoy lessons and say they particularly like using the laptops for research. Art is a 'lot of fun'. However, there are times when they find the teaching a little dull and they lose interest. Their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils move safely around the school and have good understanding about safe procedures to follow when on trips out of school. Their attendance is satisfactory.

There is a visible emphasis in the school about eating healthily and taking exercise. Most pupils happily eat healthy foods such as fruit during break times. They like the many additional sporting activities available. Pupils say playtimes involve 'a lot of running around'.

There are a good range of different opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility, such as the older ones looking after the younger ones during playtimes and the 'buddy' system for new pupils coming to school. They take these responsibilities seriously and would like to have more. They raise money for charity and join in well in the many events involving the local community.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Throughout the school, relationships are positive and pupils cooperate well with each other. Pupils answer questions confidently and are keen to participate actively in lessons. Children are supported well by the teaching assistants in Reception but they become restless when learning is not well matched to their needs. Lessons in all classes have clear objectives which the pupils understand.

Teaching approaches do not always take sufficient account of how pupils learn in different ways. Opportunities are missed, for example, for pupils to generate their own questions and challenges. Although this leads to a few pupils fidgeting in whole-class discussion, when independent tasks work is given they quickly focus on their work and are very productive. In most lessons, different work is usually set for pupils of different abilities. However, this is not always the case; and in some work is too easy and pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum to support pupils' personal development is good. There is an especially strong emphasis on the development of pupils' spiritual, moral and social understanding and this is well integrated across the school's work. Provision to support their cultural development is satisfactory. In Reception, all the areas of learning are suitably planned for. Recent improvements in other year groups are successfully building links between subjects. For example, pupils use their writing skills well in science and in many other subjects.

The good range of clubs and visits enhance learning well. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the additional sporting activities visits made. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn French and this is enriched through a trip to France as well as by links with another Catholic school via email. There are good links with the local high school and this is improving the provision in science, where the school has rightly identified a weakness in scientific investigation.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

The school's Christian ethos is central to the work of the school. A high priority is the care provided and the attention given to pupils' emotional well-being. Child protection procedures are robust. Pupils new to the school are well supported through the 'buddy' system involving the older pupils. There are good procedures in place for pupils to express their concerns either with staff or through the 'worry box'.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. There is some variation in pupils' knowledge about what they need to do to improve, reflecting how well the teachers are explaining the next steps on a day-to-day basis. Marking is good for example, in Year 2. In other classes, marking it does not consistently point to what pupils need to aim for or check that comments have been responded to. Pupils identify their own targets for improvement but these are not always useful in helping them to improve because they are too general.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leaders' clear identification of strengths and weaknesses in provision and detailed plans to rectify any shortcomings is leading to improvement in the progress that pupils make across the school. For example, specific support provided for those pupils capable of reaching the higher levels in Year 6 has had a very positive impact on current results. Standards in writing and mathematics have improved as a result of action taken. Development work is in hand to improve pupils' scientific investigation skills. These strengths in self-evaluation and the improvement being made shows that there is a good capacity to improve.

The headteacher has a strong grasp of the progress made by pupils in the school and in different classes. This information has been used well to target those pupils who may be underperforming, and provide additional support.

Governors support the work of the school well and are a visible presence in the school. They are suitably involved in the school's evaluation process and provide a satisfactory challenge to the leadership to improve standards and achievement.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<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>	3

<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	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

6 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Plymouth, PL1 4DJ

Thank you for our very warm welcome to your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and during your playtimes and were very impressed with how friendly and confident you were. You gave us a lot of valuable information and this was a great help to us. We think your school looks after you very well and is giving you a satisfactory education. The curriculum is good and teaching is satisfactory. You are making satisfactory progress, which is improving because the school is well led.

What we most liked about your school:

- you are making good progress in Years 1 and 2
- the school makes sure that you are safe and secure
- you are kind and thoughtful towards each other
- you have positive attitudes to learning and you behave well
- the after-school clubs and visits to different places help you to learn and develop your skills well
- you have a good understanding about how to stay healthy.

We found that improvements are needed and have asked your headteacher and others to:

- improve the consistency of teaching by making sure that the work given to you is not too easy or too difficult and that you can learn in different ways
- make sure that you all understand clearly how you can improve your work.

We hope your school continues to improve.

Yours faithfully

Peter Clifton Lead Inspector