

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Christchurch

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113848
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	289745
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gehane Gordelier HMI

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	227
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Birdgid Hincks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Thomson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 May 2001
<b>School address</b>	Dorset Road Somerford Christchurch BH23 3DA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 485976
<b>Fax number</b>	01202 483092

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Joseph's is an average-sized primary school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average and very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is approximately half that of other schools nationally. The school holds the 'Healthy School' award.

With the support of the local authority, the school has become one of the local leading learning schools.

## 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 and aspects of its work are outstanding. The community is proud of its school and the school plays an active role in the parish and the local community. Staff are conscientious and committed, and the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning are good overall. The latter is stronger at the top end of Key Stages 1 and 2, where there is a greater emphasis on the levels expected of pupils in these year groups. The school provides pupils with good levels of care, guidance and support, although the quality of marking and use of assessment procedures is variable. Nevertheless, the level of pastoral support for pupils is excellent. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. One parent commented that, 'St Joseph's is such a lovely school. In fact it is like one big happy family'.

The attainment of children on entry to the Foundation Stage is broadly average. They make good progress and virtually all achieve the standards expected of their age on entry into Year 1. They clearly benefit from good support, including additional support when needed. This helps to instil in pupils a very strong work ethic from an early age, which is also evident in the subsequent excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. The rate of progress accelerates visibly in Years 5 and 6, where pupils achieve extremely well and reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Standards in science have been consistently high for many years.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They quickly develop into articulate, confident and well-rounded young people with highly developed social skills and moral values. They also show a high level of consideration for the well-being of others. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are becoming increasingly aware of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

The good leadership and management in the school have brought about good improvement since the time of the last inspection in spite of staff changes. While the school itself is well led and managed, the quality of some of the action and improvement planning is variable. Many lack detail and clarity about how proposals will affect pupils and how success will be measured; furthermore, the role of some middle managers is underdeveloped. Overall, governors are supportive of the school and generally fulfil their functions well, although there is scope for improvement in the school's communications with parents and the frequency of policy review.

### What the school should do to improve further

Make better use of curricular targets and assessment so that pupils know how to progress to the next level of their learning. Further develop the role of middle leaders and managers so they can all contribute as well as they can to ensure consistently good levels of improvement throughout the school. Ensure improvement plans clarify the intended outcomes for learners and include measurable success criteria.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 is outstanding, ranking the school sixth out of all primary schools in Dorset in 2006. This has been consistently maintained in science since 2004. Although achievement in English and mathematics is now also excellent, there have been

fluctuations, with standards at times being broadly in line with national averages as opposed to significantly above.

Children settle quickly in the Foundation Stage because of the care and support provided. As a result, most make good progress and reach the expected standards in all areas of learning. Personal, social and emotional development is particularly strong; staff also promote speaking and listening skills well and this helps children to develop quickly as confident speakers. Pupils who experience difficulties are identified early on in their first term in school and benefit from well-planned individual support.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 now make increasingly good progress, as shown by the most recent test results for reading, writing and mathematics, although this is not always evident from the quality of work in pupils' books. The school has correctly identified the need to raise standards of boys' writing at Key Stage 1.

At Key Stage 2, pupils benefit from some well-focused additional support and increased levels of challenge, particularly towards the end of the key stage when the rate of their progress is further enhanced. Test results in 2006 placed the school in the top 8% nationally and the school has been within the top 15% over the last three consecutive years. The small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

The school sets suitably challenging targets and these are generally met or exceeded. In 2006, the end-of-Key Stage 2 target for mathematics was not met but the school's analysis of the results shows that targets were over-ambitious for some pupils. The targets set for the current Year 6 pupils are likely to be met.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. There are some excellent examples of spiritual development but there are missed opportunities to raise pupils' awareness across the curriculum. The school is already exploring ways to make further improvements in this area. Pupils' moral and social development is excellent and, as a result, the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is outstanding. Whilst pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths is good, their awareness of other cultures is limited, as is their exposure to the world of work.

Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. They treat each other with high levels of respect and consideration and this helps pupils to feel safe from bullying or any discrimination. Pupils state that incidents of unkind behaviour are extremely rare. They have a very good understanding of right and wrong and feel that, if they have a problem, they could tell an adult with the confidence that issues would be resolved amicably. Pupils have a good awareness of a healthy lifestyle and this was recently very well promoted by the school in a week called 'Let's Be Healthy'. Pupils are beginning to make healthier choices in their diet; they know that it is important to drink water and eat more fruit and vegetables and less food that is high in sugar and fat. However, this is not always reflected by the contents of their lunch boxes.

The school council provides an opportunity for pupils to voice their views and make a difference to school life. For instance, they recently contributed ideas for improving the playground. The allocation of a wide range of responsibilities in school and within the parish contributes significantly to raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem and leads to their excellent contribution to their community. While the school promotes teamwork very well and information

and communication technology (ICT) skills are improving, the school recognises that more could be done to develop business links and further improve the skills that would contribute to pupils' future economic well-being.

The school has been effective in improving levels of attendance which are now good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good but, while there are pockets of excellent practice, there are also areas where they could be better. Teachers' planning is usually detailed, taking account of the different learning needs of pupils, and all lessons include well-established routines. The relationships between staff and pupils are excellent; this encourages pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning and their very high levels of enjoyment of learning. Lessons generally begin with clarification of learning objectives and teachers use questions well to help pupils recall and build on previous learning. The use of different teaching techniques also makes learning enjoyable and relevant to pupils' needs. Many teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to engage pupils' interest and demonstrate new learning. Pupils are usually allowed sufficient time to think and key vocabulary is taught very well. Pupils are encouraged to talk, share ideas and express their views and this is helping them develop into confident and articulate young people. Some good links are developing between subjects and this is helping to put learning into a meaningful context, particularly in Years 2, 5 and 6.

Assessment is not always well used to support learning during lessons and pupils are not always encouraged to explain what they are learning or the progress they are making. There is at times insufficient challenge for some of the higher-attaining pupils, particularly lower down the school. In a minority of lessons, pupils are still expected to use uninspiring worksheets. Strategies to support reading and writing are not used consistently well throughout the school and this is slowing down the rate of progress for some pupils.

Additional adults make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning; however, the school recognises that they are not always deployed as well as they could be during lessons. This is mainly due to the limited time teachers and teaching assistants have to plan together. Parents are extremely supportive towards their children's learning and many act as volunteers in the school.

Teachers are making increasingly good use of ICT to support learning, but limited access to this resource results in missed opportunities for using technology to support lower-attaining pupils or to enrich the learning opportunities for others. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 are making more rapid progress with their learning, not just because of their increased levels of maturity and attitudes to learning, but also because of the sharp focus on standard assessment tests and the provision of booster and stretch classes. Teachers in these year groups also ensure that pupils are aware of success criteria and encourage them to think carefully about what they are learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of learners well. It is enriched by after-school activities and clubs as well as by visits to places of interest and residential trips. The school has been seeking ways of broadening the curriculum and developing links between subjects. It also

recognises that a more rigorous approach to teaching reading in a way that links reading and writing skills more closely would be beneficial, and this is planned for the coming year.

The use of specialists to support some subjects is very effective, particularly in music, dance, drama and games. The school is particularly proud of the provision for physical education, history and geography, as well as the progress made in ICT. Effective use is made of the Primary National Strategy to review how the curriculum is covered and to be more flexible with how subjects are taught.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good care, guidance and support and excellent levels of pastoral provision contribute very effectively to pupils' personal development and well-being. Care is evident in the passionate commitment of staff and in the effective routines and practices implemented to ensure pupils' health and safety.

Although there are pockets of extremely good academic guidance and support, the school's policy on marking and assessment is not being implemented consistently. Consequently, assessment procedures, including marking, are variable, although they are satisfactory overall. Teachers are making increasingly good use of targets to plan the levels pupils are expected to reach at the end of each year but these numerical targets are not translated sufficiently well into practical learning objectives. As a result, while some pupils are making good use of targets, others are unclear of exactly what they need to do to progress to the next level.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has very successfully ensured the continued smooth and effective running of the school despite changes amongst staff. This year the senior leadership team has stepped up to the challenge of providing additional support when needed. They are now contributing more effectively to the school's good levels of self-evaluation. This has led to improvements in the way pupils' progress is tracked and monitored and is helping to raise standards. Consequently, the leadership team are contributing well to the school's good capacity to improve.

However, the quality of improvement planning is very variable. Many documents do not make sufficient reference to the intended outcomes for learners. Furthermore, success criteria are not sufficiently quantifiable, making it difficult at times for the school to measure the progress it has made. Leadership is now distributed more democratically and dynamically throughout the school but the role of some of the middle managers remains underdeveloped.

The governors are very supportive and in many respects they operate effectively, for example, in their regular visits to school to monitor the quality of its work and in their focus on raising standards. However, there is scope for improvement in the frequency of policy review to ensure that legal requirements are met in full and in the timely issue of communications with parents.





## 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	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

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

### 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	2
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	1
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	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>	2

<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	3
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	2
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- 2 July 2007 Dear Pupils, Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 3DA I am one of the two inspectors who visited your school recently and I am writing to thank you for your help during the inspection and to let you know what we have learnt about your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and were interested in what you had to say. We were very impressed with many aspects of the school and agree with you and your parents that St Joseph's is like being in one big happy family. This is because you all get on very well and you are very kind and considerate to each other. We think you are extremely well behaved and work very hard. You know how to keep yourselves and others safe and have recently learnt a lot about how to keep yourselves healthy; you also contribute extremely well to making your school a very happy place. Your parents and the staff at the school work hard to help you do your best. This helps you make a good start and settle quickly when you begin school; it also helps you grow into very mature and sensible young people who speak very well and express your views clearly and convincingly. You make excellent progress and reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time you leave school at the end of Year 6. Those responsible for running the school are doing this well and are helping the school to improve. A good example is your use of computers. As a result of the inspection we have a few suggestions of other changes that will also help to make your school even better than it already is. We have asked the school to:
  - help all of you know how to progress to the next level in your work
  - make sure all the staff who could help the school to improve are able to do this well
  - make sure that, when the school plans important changes, they write down how they hope this will be helpful and make a difference to you. It was a real pleasure to meet you and come to your school. I am sure you will continue to work hard and wish you all the best for the future. Yours sincerely, G Gordelier Her Majesty's Inspector