

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116484
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	290550
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Olson Davis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	477
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr C McCafferty
Headteacher	Mr W James
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001
School address	Bridge Road Aldershot GU11 3DD
Telephone number	01252 350583
Fax number	01252 341158

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a large primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. About one in five comes from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is lower than in most schools and there are no pupils at the early stages of learning English. There is pre-school care, after-school care, breakfast club and a Nursery provided by 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

St. Joseph's is a good school with outstanding features. Under the purposeful leadership of the headteacher and deputy, teachers and other staff are continually driving the school forward to provide what is best for pupils. As a result, pupils achieve well and their personal development and well-being are outstanding. They show confidence and enjoyment in their learning. The large majority of parents think highly of the school. One parent said, 'A wonderful school, with a very caring, family, welcoming atmosphere. I have been so pleased with my children's progress, and development of their confidence and self-esteem.'

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and provides a stimulating range of experiences for children. Skilled staff help children to make good progress towards the learning goals expected of five-year-olds. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also achieve well because of good teaching. However, standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 are not high enough because pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Previous underachievement in Years 3 to 6 has been eliminated. Achievement is now good because teaching is good and some of it is outstanding. Teachers make effective use of assessment information to set work that is well matched to pupils' varying needs and abilities. Excellent relationships and teachers' high expectations ensure that pupils try hard and behave very well. The staff are innovative and energetic in seeking to improve the school. The school has achieved several national awards recognising its good practice in various areas, for example, in the arts and information and communication technology (ICT).

A particular strength of the school is the excellent care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils. Pupils know that they can count on adults in the school to keep them safe and to help them in the learning. Their contribution to the school community is very strong. Strong community and partnership links enrich pupils' experiences and provide many benefits to their learning.

Pupils are motivated by the stimulating activities within the good curriculum, which contributes to their good progress. One pupil said, 'I cannot say which is my favourite lesson because I enjoy them all.' The curriculum is particularly successful in meeting the needs of pupils with learning disabilities and disabilities. An important aspect is the excellent enrichment to the curriculum that contributes greatly to pupils' skills and enjoyment of school. Pupils' good basic skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT and their well developed social skills prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Good leadership and management, a clear sense of purpose and a strong commitment from staff successfully underpin the school's work. In view of the recent rapid progress in raising standards, the school is well placed to improve further. Governors provide good support to the school and successfully hold it to account for the standards achieved by pupils. They have been instrumental in setting up out-of-school provision, and so forging closer links between the school and its community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 by providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from their starting points to attain above average standards. Reception children start school in the Foundation Stage with generally below average knowledge and skills. The majority reach the standards expected in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. They make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Standards at the end of Year 2 are consistently above average but pupils' performance in mathematics is not as strong as their performance in reading and writing. Although pupils have good numerical skills they sometimes have difficulty in applying their knowledge to solve problems.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have been consistently above average since the last inspection. However, results of national tests in 2004 and 2005 revealed some underachievement by more able pupils. As a result of improvements made by the headteacher and staff, pupils' rate of progress improved significantly in 2006. Pupils did exceptionally well in the national assessments in English. The school met its challenging targets. The school's tracking of pupils' progress shows that the current Year 6 are making good progress and are well on their way to achieving high standards in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported so that they make good progress. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and pupils with English as an additional language make the same good progress as their class-mates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils develop in confidence and self-esteem throughout their school years. They work well in groups, take responsibility for their own learning and put a great deal of effort into their work. They thoroughly enjoy school because, 'Teachers are friendly and they help you out a lot'. As a result, attendance is above average. Participation in the School Council and Healthy School Committee enables pupils to take on responsibilities and to have a very strong say in school improvements. Pupils make decisions about which charities they will support through their fund-raising activities. Older pupils make a very good job of running the 'buddy' system to support Year 2 children. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle. At break times they are active and there is a high take up of the many sporting activities and clubs on offer.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is reflected in pupils' excellent behaviour. Pupils gain strong awareness of spiritual and cultural values through assemblies and lessons in art, music, personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and religious education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. During the inspection, some outstanding teaching was observed throughout the school. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and delight in the progress that they make as they learn new

skills. This is because teachers make skilled use of assessment information to match work to the right level for pupils so that they all make good progress. Pupils appreciate the useful comments that teachers make both verbally and in writing to help them improve their work. Teachers make good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to explain ideas clearly to pupils and to encourage pupils' active participation. On occasions, however, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to clarify their thinking by discussing their work.

Pupils benefit greatly from the specialist teaching they receive, especially in music and ICT. Skilled teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide good help for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well matched to the needs of pupils. It is particularly strong in promoting pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. As a result, most pupils achieve well in these areas. However, the mathematics curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 provides insufficient opportunities for them to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve practical problems. Teachers make good links between subjects to enhance pupils' learning. ICT is used well to support pupils' work in other areas. Pupils learn to lead healthy lives and to adopt safe practices through a well planned personal, social and health education programme. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good.

The curriculum is greatly enhanced by a wide range of visits, visitors and special events such as 'Arts Week'. These support learning well and contribute to pupils' good cultural development. There is high participation in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. These develop pupils' physical, personal and social skills and add to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There are rigorous procedures for the safeguarding of pupils and for ensuring their health and safety on site. Pupils feel safe because they know who to turn to if they are upset or worried about anything. They say that rare incidents of unkind behaviour are dealt with promptly and effectively by adults. Pupils are given very good academic guidance. Teachers monitor progress to set challenging targets for pupils. They share assessment information with pupils so that they are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. The school forms excellent partnerships with outside agencies to provide for its vulnerable pupils. There is good provision for identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and for evaluating their progress. Parents very much appreciate this aspect of the school's work. One wrote, 'My child's special needs have been addressed and accommodated with fantastic sensitivity and professionalism.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision for the future direction of the school and provide excellent leadership. Subject leaders play their full part in raising standards and improving provision in their areas of responsibility. They ensure that pupils' progress is tracked in great detail so that those in danger of

underachieving are identified and supported promptly. As a result, underachievement in years 3 to 6 has been tackled successfully and standards are rising further. Rigorous school self-evaluation enables school leaders to have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing. The school improvement plan correctly identifies the key areas for improvement. However, it does not place sufficient emphasis on raising standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored well, with regular observations leading to useful feedback and improvements in practice. The school places great importance on developing its teachers to take on leadership roles. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strategic development through information they request from key staff and from their own effective monitoring. This allows them to play a leading role in the school's development. They make sure that financial resources are used well for the benefit of pupils.

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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>	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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	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	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	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	1
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

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?	1

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.

Annex A

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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Aldershot, GU11 3DD

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and took careful note of what you and your parents had to say about the school.

St Joseph's is a good school and you help to make it so. Here are a few of the many good things about your school:

- you are doing well and reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science
- you have good teachers who know how well you are getting on and give you good advice about how to improve
- you obviously enjoy school a great deal because your attendance is good and you behave very well in lessons and around the school
- you are very well cared for by the adults in school and you feel safe there.
- you are given lots of interesting activities to do
- you are responsible and make a great contribution to the life of the school.
- the headteacher, staff and governors run the school well.

We have asked your teachers to do the following to make things even better:

- give pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 more opportunities to work on mathematics problems.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your school. We also hope that you will help your teachers as they work hard to make your school even better for you.

Yours sincerely

Olson Davis

Lead Inspector