



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117429
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290833
Inspection date 27 November 2006
Reporting inspector Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Royal Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Waltham Cross
Age range of pupils	3-11		Hertfordshire EN8 7EN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01992 629503
Number on roll (school)	233	Fax number	01992 628824
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Christopher Quinn
		Headteacher	Miss Clare McFlynn
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2001		

Age group 3-11	Inspection date 27 November 2006	Inspection number 290833
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© 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 an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. The school serves a wide catchment area in Waltham Cross and is heavily over-subscribed. About half the pupils are of White British heritage and there are pupils from each of 12 other ethnic backgrounds. The largest of these groups are White Irish and White - any other White background. There are two pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils are from a mix of economic backgrounds with the area having particularly high unemployment. The proportion entitled to free school meals is about a quarter of the national average. The number with learning difficulties and disabilities is about half of the national average. Attainment on entry is at the level typically found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

A parent wrote 'This is an excellent school. Our children look forward to each day with all the excitement and new challenges that St Joseph's provides.' This statement exemplifies the school well. St Joseph's is an outstanding school which provides excellent value for money, excels in all areas and yet is determined to improve even more. There is an all-pervading atmosphere of support, care, and fellowship. Pupils love learning and are immensely proud of their school. Staff and pupils are deeply committed to ensuring that all thrive in their learning and thoroughly enjoy all that the school has to offer. As one pupil said, 'When we come to school we all feel part of one big family.' As an example of the pupils' excellent appreciation of their own safety and security, another pupil said, 'We are a community so we feel safe and make sure no-one hurts others. We feel physically safe and also safe in our hearts and minds.' This mature and reflective comment encapsulates the extraordinarily high level of the pupils' personal development and well being. Behaviour is exemplary whether adults are present or not. For example, three Year 6 librarians operate a lunchtime club where they read stories and play games in the library with a large group of Reception children three times each week. These children were spellbound when listening to the stories being read to them, and were as responsive to the gentle requests, questions and prompts of the Year 6 pupils as they were to their teacher. Another pupil explained that 'At this school every child matters.' This was reflected in a presentation made by the school council to the inspector which stated, 'At St Joseph's every week is an anti-bullying week.'

As a result of the outstanding quality of teaching and learning throughout the school, pupils make rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well. They make a flying start in the Nursery where the provision and achievement are outstanding. They continue to make excellent progress in each year group. By the time that they leave, standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. In some aspects of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly those concerned with pupils' monitoring and control skills, standards are average.

However, this is not a school that only focuses on subjects that are tested. The curriculum is excellent. It is rich and has been adapted exceptionally well to meet pupils' needs. There is a strong emphasis on the Arts, particularly music. Almost a third of the pupils, for example, play an orchestral instrument. In consequence, the school helps to develop mature, responsible, high achieving and well-rounded pupils who have a love of learning.

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher is the driving force behind the school's success and its huge capacity to improve. Her leadership and management are outstanding. She has a clear vision for the school which is shared by the whole community. She is exceptionally well supported by the highly skilled deputy headteacher, a senior teacher and other members of staff with responsibilities. Governance, too, is excellent with governors providing outstanding support and being truly critical friends to the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills when using ICT for monitoring and control purposes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress in all year groups. On entering Year 1, attainment is above average, particularly in the pupils' personal, social and emotional skills. This is the result of excellent provision in the Foundation Stage where children are helped to become secure and confident learners. They make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups. At the end of Year 6, standards have been exceptionally high for the past four years. The average level for the whole cohort was at the higher level in each of English, mathematics and science. All groups of pupils make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Behaviour is excellent and pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning and they enjoy school exceptionally well. Their attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All these strengths are the result of the excellent quality of the provision and the over-riding ethos of inclusion that permeates all aspects of the school. Pupils not only have exceptionally high expectations of themselves, but also for others. Opportunities for them taking responsibility are myriad: all Year 6 pupils delight, for example, in taking care of their buddies in Year R. The school council provides an exceptional opportunity for pupils to take responsibility and they make key decisions that affect the school. Pupils have an exceptional understanding of financial matters by working closely together to make and sell items for various fund-raising events. They are particularly well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection, particularly in the two infant years. The teaching in these classes is excellent and an important factor in the school's success. Throughout the school teachers plan lessons exceptionally well and ensure that all pupils are provided with high quality activities. These challenge the pupils to do their best. For example, in an excellent Year 6 lesson, the teacher set a demanding task for pupils to consider their first day at school when studying part of Laurie Lee's 'Cider with Rosie'. They rose to the challenge and produced exciting, gripping narrative that reflected their thoughts

and feelings. Learning is excellent because pupils are eager and teachers make sure that the wide range of pupils' preferred ways of learning are incorporated into lessons. For example, excellent use is made of the interactive whiteboards to capture interest. In addition, the high quality teaching assistants make a very considerable contribution to the pupils' learning and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is of high quality and the school offers a great deal that goes beyond the statutory requirements. The development of pupils' creative talents is encouraged through a very strong focus on the performing arts and which is linked very well to topics being studied. For example, professional dancers taught pupils Tudor dances and played medieval instruments as part of their history project. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the wide range of opportunities provided through instrumental lessons, after-school clubs and they delight in the good range of sporting opportunities provided. In addition, they practise their French during the annual residential visit to Normandy. The curriculum is carefully planned and organised and the strong ethos of inclusion helps all the children, whatever their needs, to effectively build on their skills and knowledge.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is outstanding because all adults know the pupils very well and the pupils say that they appreciate the care and support that is provided for them. Very good attention is given to ensuring children are safe and well looked after at school. Support and guidance for personal development are outstanding and children get along together exceptionally well. Arrangements for assessing how well children are doing academically are exemplary. Children are given extremely good advice about how well they are doing and clear guidance on how to improve. The marking of work is of the highest quality. Teachers' well-focused comments links closely to the pupils' individual targets and give clear guidance on how to improve further. As a result, the children have extremely good knowledge of their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school has exceptionally well-developed systems for checking how well it is doing and this involves all staff with responsibilities. As a result of this accurate understanding of the school's provision and pupils' achievements, improvement planning is highly effective and accurate. Governors play an important role in checking progress against targets by frequently visiting the school and asking helpful and useful questions about how improvement targets are progressing.

The school environment is highly attractive and of exceptional quality. Accommodation is spacious and, due to meticulous planning, there have been outstanding improvements to the built environment which is now excellent. The high quality displays showing a broad range of excellent work covering the whole curriculum significantly adds to the positive atmosphere and helps pupils to feel positive about school.

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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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	1

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	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

1 December 2006

Dear Pupils

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Royal Avenue, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire, EN8 7EN

I really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you very much for the friendly way you welcomed me and for your help in finding out about the school.

Both you and your parents told me that you love coming to school and that you feel safe and well cared for. I am not surprised. Yours is an excellent school and everybody who works there tries very hard to help you to do outstandingly well. Your teachers are good and work hard to make sure that lessons are made interesting and exciting. Your headteacher has done an outstanding job in making sure that you all work and play together in such a friendly way and to make the school so successful. I was very impressed with your behaviour, which is excellent and helps the teachers help you to learn, and also the way you make sure that everyone feels part of the family of your school.

You work really hard in lessons so that you learn lots of new things. Your progress is excellent and you attain very high standards in English, mathematics and science.

I have asked your teachers to make sure that you get more opportunities to use ICT to help you to make your skills in monitoring and control even better.

You're really lucky to go to St Joseph's Primary School. It is an exciting and extremely friendly place where everybody wants the best for you. Thank you once again for being so helpful to me.

With very best wishes for your future,

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector