



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120224
Local Authority Leicester City
Inspection number 291675
Inspection date 6 February 2007
Reporting inspector Martin Cole

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Armadale Drive |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Leicester |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 | | LE5 1HF |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0116 2416197 |
| Number on roll (school) | 298 | Fax number | 0116 2416197 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | John Boynton |
| | | Headteacher | Virginia Marston |
| Date of previous school inspection | 18 February 2002 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is larger than average and serves a residential area of mainly local authority housing. Parents' social and economic circumstances are generally below average, and some experience social deprivation. Pupils' attainment is a little below average when starting at the school and has declined over recent years. At the same time, the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language has risen and is now nearly one fifth.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and their good personal development and sense of well-being are a significant strength.

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage thanks to the good teaching and the curriculum provided for them, and their standards are in line with those expected for their ages by the time they start Year 1. Between Years 1 and 6, pupils make steady progress and they leave Year 6 with broadly average standards. Throughout the school, pupils' good personal development provides a good basis for learning. Pupils behave well, want to learn and are keen to do well. They feel safe and happy at school and enjoy being there. All of this reflects the good quality of care, support and guidance given to pupils. A growth in confidence and in responsible attitudes is helping to prepare pupils well for the demands of future adult life. So, too, is a willingness to contribute positively to the community.

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, although it is good in the Foundation Stage and sometimes in other classes, too. A clear strength of the teaching is the effective way pupils are managed so that lessons are orderly and efficient. Although keen to make progress, pupils are not always able to make as much progress as they could. This is because of some inconsistencies in the teaching, particularly in matching pupils' work to their needs as shown by their previous learning. The curriculum, too, is satisfactory. It provides suitable programmes of work in subjects and caters well for pupils' personal and social needs. A good range of educational visits, visitors and optional activities outside lessons, particularly in sport and music, makes a valuable addition to pupils' opportunities to learn. The curriculum misses some opportunities to reinforce pupils' basic skills and add interest to their work by linking subjects. In particular, pupils have too little opportunity to use information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their learning.

The presence of some inconsistencies in the teaching partly reflects the recent high turnover of teaching staff in Years 1 to 6 and the continuing need for some temporary appointments. Satisfactory leadership and management have guided the school soundly through staffing difficulties and the need to adapt to a more challenging intake of pupils. The school has largely maintained the strengths and has resolved the weaknesses identified at its previous inspection. A very good ethos remains a distinctive strength of the school. Senior staff keep a good check on the school's performance, understand well how it can improve and make appropriate plans for improvement. There is a sound capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make the quality of teaching more consistent by bringing more lessons up to the standard of the best, especially in the matching of pupils' tasks to their abilities.
- Provide more links between subjects to increase the interest, enjoyment and relevance pupils are able to find in their work, and to give more opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, where stability of staffing has helped to ensure consistently good teaching and curriculum provision. In most areas of their learning, children complete the Foundation Stage with standards similar to those expected for children of their age. In Years 1 to 6, progress is less consistent but still satisfactory overall. The progress of the most able pupils, though satisfactory, is a little less than that of others. Pupils' recent results in national tests taken in Year 2 and Year 6 have been close to the national average. Results have dipped a little compared with previous years as the attainment of pupils starting at the school has declined and frequent staff changes have led to some inconsistency in teaching. Sound support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is helping them to make satisfactory progress toward the targets set for them. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils get off to a very good start in the Nursery and Reception classes in developing good attitudes and behaviour. Throughout the school, good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is helping pupils acquire a firm sense of right and wrong, to take responsibility, to make co-operative and respectful relationships and to acquire much self-confidence. Pupils enjoy school. Only when very occasional playground disagreements go unresolved are pupils less than content. Pupils' many positive personal qualities are preparing them well for future adult and working life. A good understanding of their own progress toward personal goals and academic targets is giving pupils a responsible attitude to their own learning. Pupils respond well to good opportunities to contribute constructively to the school and wider community. The school council has lively, assertive but polite discussions with the school cook about lunch menus and balancing pupils' preferences with the need to eat healthily. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and most make some effort to apply this to their choices about diet and exercise. Rotating responsibilities of 'head boy' and 'head girl' give a good many older pupils valuable experience, for example, greeting visitors and showing them around the school. Pupils themselves organize many charitable fund-raising events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

A strength of the teaching is the effective way teachers manage pupils so that they almost always behave well in lessons and concentrate willingly on their work. This

makes for calm, purposeful lessons where learning proceeds at a lively pace. Teachers provide plenty of help and encouragement that give pupils confidence. Many pupils show a notable willingness to speak up in class and express their ideas. Teaching assistants provide effective, intensive support for pupils having difficulty in learning or who are at an early stage of learning English. The school keeps a good track of pupils' progress from term to term and uses the information well to identify pupils making less progress than expected and to ensure extra help is given to them. However, day-to-day assessment of pupils in Years 1 to 6 is sometimes not used sufficiently well to plan tasks that match their abilities and needs. Consequently, there are some lessons in which some pupils, particularly more-able ones, make less progress than they could. Teachers mark pupils work thoroughly, indicating and explaining errors and giving praise where it is due. Sometimes, the marking gives pupils good individual guidance on the improvement to aim for in their future work, but this practice is not found consistently across all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets national requirements in its provision for subjects and for the range of pupils' needs. Programmes that provide for pupils' personal and social needs, including their health and safety, are good. There is good enrichment of the curriculum from educational visits and visitors. A residential visit to an outdoor pursuits camp promotes initiative and team building. Visitors support drama, music and other events that help pupils appreciate cultural diversity. Termly 'theme weeks', when all the work focuses on a single topic, provide extra interest. However, there are some opportunities to create interest and enjoyment that the school does not exploit. Work in subjects is not often linked with that in others to make the relevance of pupils' studies clear to them, or to carry interest generated in one subject over to another. This also means that pupils miss out on some potential opportunities to apply the skills gained in literacy, numeracy or ICT to their learning in other areas. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning and to exploit the capacity to learn independently that they clearly have. The school currently has too little ICT equipment of the right quality to provide sufficient opportunities of this sort.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Caring relationships between school staff and pupils combine with close links with parents to promote the good quality of care, support and guidance the school gives to pupils. In addition, the school has robust procedures for safeguarding pupils and keeping a close check on their welfare. Pupils remark on how helpful teachers and teaching assistants are, especially when they are finding their work difficult. However, they say they would occasionally like more help to resolve playground disagreements. Parents think very highly of the school and particularly appreciate the thorough way the school keeps them informed of their children's progress, the targets set for them and the support parents can give to their children's learning. In addition to normal

parents' evenings, for consultation with teachers, the school arranges meetings with parents of children whose progress is a concern. Pupils' responsible attitudes are well promoted and employed in the setting of targets for future achievement in literacy, numeracy and science. Pupils know and understand their targets well and are keen to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The many recent staff changes and temporary arrangements have made the senior staff's key task of school improvement harder. Nevertheless, the school has maintained the strengths identified at its previous inspection in Foundation Stage provision, in pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and relationships, and in the strong partnership with parents. It has also resolved the weaknesses previous inspectors found in some aspects of the curriculum and of management. In addition, provision has been successfully adapted to meet the needs of a more challenging intake of pupils. Senior staff are supportive of colleagues' professional development but some inconsistencies in the teaching reflect a lack of precise guidance to staff on the practices the school expects. Substantial procedures, supported by good training for subject leaders, ensure a good check is kept on the school's performance. Consequently, senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and of how it can move forward. Detailed planning for improvement shows appropriate priorities, and the school has rightly recognised that improving consistency in teaching is now paramount. Governors contribute soundly to the school's checks and help to ensure all legal requirements are met.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |

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? | 2 |

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

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| 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 | 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

I would like to thank all of you for your friendly welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed meeting and talking to you.

I was pleased that you told me that you enjoy school. I could see that this is because the adults look after you well. They do their best to make sure you are happy at school. The teachers give you suitable lessons and plenty of help and encouragement. This is helping you to make satisfactory progress in your work. It was good to see that you take your school work seriously and try hard. I also noticed that your behaviour is good and that you generally get on well with each other and with the adults.

I was impressed at the many ways you take on responsibilities for helping the school and the community. Your school council does a good job and many of you are involved in organizing the many events to raise funds for charity.

I was also glad to see that you know what you need to do to stay healthy. Many of you are trying to eat more healthily and to take plenty of exercise.

I have said that the education your school is giving you is satisfactory overall. Some parts of your education are good. The adults in charge of the school are doing as they should to help you and are trying to make the school better still. I have suggested some ways that the school could help you learn and enjoy your work even more successfully:

- Some lessons are better than others. I have asked the teachers to try to make all your lessons good ones so that you are always learning as much as possible.
- Some of you said that some lessons do not interest you much. I have suggested the teachers should plan more of your work to be enjoyable and interesting and to give you more opportunities to use equipment like computers to help you learn.

I wish you all the best for the future.