

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124354
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	292968
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Walsh

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	232
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	M Mulhoon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ellen Wright
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Hill Top Hednesford Cannock WS12 1DE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 512230
<b>Fax number</b>	01543 512232

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a popular, oversubscribed school of average size. The school has a part time Nursery class. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The school has been awarded Active Mark Gold and Dyslexia Friendly Status.

## 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 with outstanding provision for pupils' care, guidance and support. As a parent said, reflecting the views of others, 'We are happy and confident that our children are being looked after in a safe nurturing environment'. Parents are very supportive of the school. They feel welcome because all staff, including the headteacher, are very approachable. Teaching is good and interesting lessons ensure that pupils really enjoy school. Pupils say their teachers 'are all lovely and they teach you well'.

Pupils' good personal development is reflected in their positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. Pupils learn to care about each other within a strong Christian ethos where the staff provide very good role models. They make an outstanding contribution to their school and the wider community. The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities such as the art club, music and sporting activities and residential visits.

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Pupils usually start the school with average standards. They make good progress which accelerates as they move through the school. In 2006, pupils reached exceptionally high standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they get very good support. Higher ability pupils do particularly well in Years 3 to 6 because they are consistently given challenging work.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. There have been substantial changes in staffing in the Nursery and Reception classes, and teaching and children's achievement are satisfactory at present. The accommodation for the Nursery and Reception classes is unsatisfactory and there is insufficient provision for outdoor play. This restricts the range of activities that can be planned for both classes and holds back children's progress. Resources need updating and the activities provided are not always exciting.

Leadership and management are good. Pupils, parents and staff think highly of the headteacher. She has ensured a very caring environment whilst keeping a strong focus on improving standards. Effective self-evaluation, combined with efficient development planning, has ensured that the school has identified and tackled most weaknesses. Improved opportunities for creative writing in a wide range of subjects, together with good quality marking that provides pupils with very effective guidance, have led to accelerated progress and much improved standards in writing, particularly in Years 3 to 6. This shows the school has a good capacity to improve further. The new Key Stage coordinators are enthusiastic but they are not yet fully involved in monitoring achievement and standards or the quality of provision.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve accommodation and resources for the Nursery and Reception classes and ensure that the curriculum offers a full range of exciting stimulating activities including outdoor play.
- Develop the role of the newly appointed Key Stage coordinators so they can make a stronger contribution to raising standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and pupils reach above average standards. Pupils make sound progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because of the satisfactory provision. By the end of Reception, most reach the expected early learning goals for learning of children of this age although there has been a slight decline more recently.

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average. Standards are above average in reading and writing but are average in mathematics. By Year 6, standards have been above average for some time but in 2006 they improved and were exceptionally high, as a result of significant improvements in the English results. In the past, standards in English had been broadly average and achievement in English had been much slower than in other subjects because pupils were not making sufficient progress in writing. Increased opportunities for writing, together with careful checking of pupils' progress and clear guidance to pupils about where they can improve their work, has led to improved achievement and higher standards. Pupils now produce lively and accurate pieces of writing that are very well presented. In 2006 a high proportion of pupils gained the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils say they really enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Behaviour is good and there is a calm atmosphere in school. Pupils' positive attitudes are an important factor in their good achievement. Older pupils work very hard in their lessons but a minority of younger boys exhibit immature behaviour. They are usually well controlled by teachers and do not affect the learning of others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop empathy and are sympathetic to the feelings of others. As a result, bullying is rare and pupils report that teachers quickly resolve any minor fallings out. Pupils now have greater opportunities to find out about different cultures and racial harmony is promoted well. Pupils are very keen to contribute to the school community through the school council and their work as monitors and helpers. They willingly raise funds for those who are less fortunate in their local community. Pupils put their good knowledge about keeping healthy into practice by eating healthy snacks at breaks and taking lots of exercise. Pupils of all ages and staff enthusiastically join in the 'Wake up – Shake up' session before school. It is a terrific start to the day that encourages pupils to keep healthy while having the maximum amount of fun. High academic standards together with positive attitudes and increasing levels of independence ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

In Years 1 to 6 lively teaching engages pupils well, makes learning enjoyable and promotes good achievement. Teaching is less exciting in the Nursery and Reception classes, partly because the activities are restricted by the accommodation and lack of stimulating resources. Throughout the school, relationships between pupils and staff are very good and ensure that pupils develop the confidence to ask questions about their work. Tasks are well matched to pupils' needs in

Years 1 to 6, which ensures that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour, academic standards and presentation of work. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are used very well to make lessons more interesting and to enhance pupils' understanding of difficult concepts such as measuring volume. Tasks that are especially interesting to boys help to ensure they do well. Teaching assistants carry out some good work supporting less able pupils but they are often underused during introductions to lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

In Years 1 to 6, good provision is made for the development of pupils' basic skills including literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. The school takes care to provide a broad range of worthwhile learning opportunities, including the teaching of a modern foreign language. Links between subjects are used well to reinforce learning. Very good opportunities for pupils to practice their writing skills in a wide range of subjects, including history and religious education, have helped to improve standards in writing. A good range of visits, visitors and school clubs enriches the curriculum and makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and personal development.

The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on developing the skills associated with being literate and numerate, especially in the Reception class. However, the range of activities that can be planned are severely restricted by unsuitable accommodation, including the lack of access to suitable outdoor play facilities. This, together with a lack of exciting resources that fire children's imaginations, holds back children's progress, particularly their physical and creative development and their acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the wider world.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare are very thorough and well implemented and as a result, pupils say, 'People feel very safe in this school'. Vulnerable pupils are identified quickly and supported effectively. Warm relationships permeate the school. Pupils know that their views are listened to and respected, which helps them to develop confidence. Pupils' academic progress is carefully checked and any pupils at risk of underachieving are quickly identified and given effective support. Older pupils receive exceptionally detailed and clear academic guidance in English. This has led to improved achievement and helped to raise standards, especially in writing. The excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is very much appreciated by parents, who recognise that their children are making good progress in their personal development as well as in their school work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership from the headteacher has resulted in the provision of a very supportive Christian environment where pupils feel safe and very well cared for. There is a strong focus on raising standards and continual improvement. Staff are hard working and parents recognise their commitment, typically saying that 'teachers are dedicated and enthusiastic'. Procedures for checking the school's work are good and have ensured that most areas for development have

been accurately identified and addressed. The school has successfully raised standards in writing. Changes to the management structure have ensured a keen and enthusiastic management team but the very newly appointed members have not yet developed the necessary skills to check standards and achievement and the quality of provision, including teaching. There are very effective links with parents, the community, external agencies and other education providers that contribute well to pupils' good achievement and personal development. Governors know the school well and provide effective support and challenge.

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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>	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	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>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<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	2
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	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>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<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	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**

12 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Hednesford, WS12 1DE

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. We really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. You are quite right to be proud of your school. It is good! You told us that your teachers look after you very well and you find them very helpful. It's clear that you have a good time at school because of all the exciting things you have to do. We were very pleased to hear that you enjoyed your visits to Wales and Shugborough. It is evident that you had a wonderful time. We were impressed by your good behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. It was good to hear that you know how to keep fit and healthy. We thought that the 'Wake up – Shake up' session before school was terrific!

Your lessons are interesting and fun but your teachers also make sure you work hard too and that is why the quality of teaching is good. We know you all try hard and do your best. You are doing well with your work and reach high standards. Senior managers at your school are doing a good job but we have asked some of the other teachers to develop their skills further so they can help the headteacher even more.

We have asked your teachers to make sure that those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes have more interesting things to do and are able to play outside more. We have asked them to make sure the toys and other things that help you learn are of good quality and that the areas they use are improved.

Thank you again for being such good company.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh Lead Inspector