



St Joseph The Worker Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131836
Local Authority Knowsley
Inspection number 293861
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Michael McDowell

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bewley Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Southdene, Kirkby
Age range of pupils	3–11		Liverpool, Merseyside L32 9PF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 4778173
Number on roll (school)	218	Fax number	0151 4778172
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Anthony McGuiness
		Headteacher	Miss C Gordon
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a Catholic primary school in Kirkby that has very strong links with the parish of St Joseph the Worker which it serves. It is of average size but the number on roll has been falling steadily over recent years. Most pupils come from Catholic families and English is the language spoken at home. None are drawn from minority ethnic groups. Just over a third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much greater than average. In 2004, following the closure of a neighbouring school, the proportion of pupils joining the school late rose remarkably. This was particularly significant in Year 6 in 2005 in which a quarter of the pupils were newcomers in Key Stage 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school serves its community well and lives up to its mission, to be 'a loving, Christian family striving to achieve excellence for its pupils'.

Care, guidance and support, especially for the most vulnerable pupils, are exceptional. Pupils know that they are valued and this encourages them to value others. Teachers set clear challenging targets for pupils to aim for. There is effective dialogue with pupils but marking of their work is inconsistent. Consequently, pupils are not as well informed on how they can improve as they could be. Pupils' personal development is exceptionally good because the school supports and cares for them so well. A small number of parents take their children on holiday during term-time. This lowers the overall attendance.

Achievement is good overall. Children's attainment on entering the Nursery is very low for their age. However, when they reach Year 6, standards are broadly average, apart from in 2005, when results fell partly because of an influx of pupils with low attainment moving into the school.

The majority of pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in English, mathematics and science. In 2005, performance measured at the end of Year 6 fell well short of both national standards and the school's own expectations. However, in 2006, results improved. The proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 doubled in English, increased by a third in mathematics and more than quadrupled in science. The proportion of pupils gaining the national standard, Level 4, also increased in mathematics and science. However, standards in writing still lag behind those in reading and pupils have some gaps in their mathematical knowledge.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is of a consistently high standard. It is evident that children thrive and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Teaching and learning are also of good quality overall in Years 1 to 6. Children are eager to learn and behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Pupils show refreshing eagerness to share what they have done and to praise the efforts of their classmates.

There is a broad range of interesting things for pupils to do. Pupils have many chances to learn outside the classroom through clubs and sport. Regular specialist teaching in a local secondary school greatly enhances the learning opportunities of those in Years 4, 5, and 6.

Leadership and management are good. Robust systems are in place to keep the school under review and to assess the performance of pupils, staff, senior managers and the headteacher. The school has a clear view of what it does well and what it needs to develop. However, it is too modest in judging the personal development of pupils to be good – it is outstanding. The school is deeply committed to equality of opportunity and ensures that the needs of individual pupils are known and met. Resources are used effectively.

The school effectively integrates pupils who join it at a later stage. It takes steps to assess their achievement and to make sure that they receive the help they need to catch up in their learning and to make progress.

The school gives good value for money and has improved since it was last inspected in 2002. It has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6 to raise standards by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Improve marking so that pupils know how to raise their achievement.
- Improve attendance by reducing absences through holidays taken in term time.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with skills well below those typical of 3-year-olds. Their communication, language, and literacy skills are very weak. They make very good progress and by the end of the Reception Year most have achieved the goals expected for children of this age. Pupils of all levels of ability, including those who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties, build on the very good start made in the Foundation Stage. Children in Key Stage 1 achieve well and reach the standards expected in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Achievement has improved in Key Stage 2. In 2005, results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 were well below average and few of the higher achievers reached their potential. Achievement in science was weak and the school failed to meet its targets. It could do little about some of the factors underlying these outcomes. There was a very high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as a significant number of children who had recently joined the school, in the Year 6 group. Nevertheless, standards were unacceptable and the school took effective action to improve them. In 2006, standards significantly improved, although less so in writing and mathematics than in reading and science. In particular, performance in science was much better, rising from 64% achieving Level 4 in 2005, to 75% doing so in 2006.

In view of all that the school has done, and in relation to pupils' starting points, progress is now good. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress is carefully tracked, as it is elsewhere in school. The school's own assessments show that those in Year 6 are doing well and are on course to meet the challenging targets set for them. Standards in writing, which have lagged behind the higher standards achieved in reading, are beginning to improve, but more still needs to be done. However, a number of pupils reach Year 6 with gaps in their mathematical knowledge. More than previously, higher achieving pupils are building on the good grades they attained at the end of Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Assemblies and the 'Here I am' programme are excellent in promoting spiritual development and respect for different cultures, customs and beliefs. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary at all times and the pupil councillors show great pride in their school. They like their teachers because, 'they make lessons interesting and you can talk to them if you are stuck'. Even the youngest children understand the importance of developing healthy lifestyles, 'We drink milk because its good for your bones' said one nursery child enjoying a healthy snack while sitting alongside a model skeleton, placed there to illustrate the point. The new 'Zone Park' has had a positive impact upon pupil's physical health and supports the happy playtimes. The Foundation Stage outdoor provision ensures a seamless link between physical development and other learning opportunities for the youngest children. Healthy lifestyles are promoted through the healthy lunches and a wealth of sporting opportunities offered to pupils. There are excellent links with local sports colleges. Attendance is below average, with too many holidays being taken in term time. The school has made efforts to address this and attendance is steadily improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers in the Foundation Stage have excellent knowledge of how children learn and of how play and learning go together. Pupils of all ages are treated as unique individuals, and each brings her or his own gifts and needs to the family of the school. Expectations are high. Pupils report that they enjoy lessons as much as the social opportunities at the school. Teachers retain sight of the learning objectives of lessons very well and use questioning very skilfully to shape learning. They make clear to each pupil by talking to them, what is expected and what steps should be taken for them to improve: this is not always the case when they mark pupils' work. Very positive relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to a calm and productive learning climate in classrooms. Pupils trust their teachers and teaching assistants and say that they can rely on them for help and advice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of the whole child. Due emphasis is given to developing the personal qualities of children. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned and successfully focuses on improving oral communication skills. A recent reorganisation of the timetable has helped to make the most productive use of time and ensure sufficient emphasis on important areas, including science. The primary teaching base at a local secondary school, which has been set up by a cluster

of schools, is very helpful in extending learning opportunities. Through this, pupils from Year 4 onwards have the chance to experience specialist teaching and to get used to the secondary school setting. Enhancement of learning through visits, visitors, and clubs is very extensive and broadens learning opportunities significantly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. Staff show great commitment to the aim of being a "loving Christian family", and this is apparent in the exceptional work of the Learning Mentor. She ensures that there is excellent support for children with emotional and behavioural needs through skilled intervention and links with parents, staff and other professionals. The Breakfast Club provides an important facility that gives a large group of pupils a calm, happy, healthy and positive start to the school day.

Children in the school feel safe from bullying and are involved in many anti-bullying initiatives. They feel they could talk to an adult if they were upset or worried. Older pupils take their responsibilities for supporting younger ones very seriously and they work as play leaders, buddies and monitors. Child Protection procedures are thorough and well understood by staff. Risk assessments are carried out meticulously. Pupils understand their individual learning targets which are reviewed regularly and shared with parents but, while work is marked, this is not done with sufficient consistency to make a significant impact upon pupil's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides an excellent example of calm assurance and dedication to the school and its aims. However, her pride in the school is balanced by a realistic appraisal of what still remains to be done. The governors are well informed; they are supportive but rigorous in holding the school to account. There is a clear understanding shared by governors, headteacher and staff that the school owes a duty to its pupils to continue to strive to raise standards. Leadership and management in the Foundation Stage are outstanding and this is reflected in the consistently high achievement of children in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has accommodated pupils from other schools well. It has ensured that their strengths as learners and their needs are known, and has supported them where required. They have been welcomed into the community of the school. The school's expertise in Early Years education makes it a good choice as the site for a Children's Centre that is being built beside it. Management of resources is good. These are used effectively to promote the interests and achievements of pupils. The school has been prompt to take action following recent changes in legislation on safeguarding children and its processes and record keeping comply with national requirements.

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Inspection judgements

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

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	1
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	3
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	3
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	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?	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.

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

Thank you for being so helpful when we visited your school. We thought the polite way in which you spoke to us was very good and we listened carefully to what you had to tell us. Almost all of you said that you liked coming to school, that you trusted your teachers and teaching assistants and found them helpful, and that you felt safe. You said that you knew what you were expected to do in lessons and that there was always an adult to help you if you got stuck. You knew a lot about healthy eating and the need to take exercise in order to be fit.

From what we saw we agree with you about all these things. We found that you were very carefully looked after and taught well, that your teachers know what you are good at and what you need help with. They try their best to help you to do your work better. You are given interesting and enjoyable things to do both in lessons and other times. It was good to see how proud many of you are to be 'buddies' and to help look after the younger children. Those of you who are councillors also do a great job in speaking out for others.

We think that your school is led and managed well so that you may all benefit from your time here. Most of you are working very hard in class to meet your targets and you need to keep up your efforts. There is still some way to go to make sure that the school gets the results it deserves and of which you can all be proud. A few of you, who do not attend as often as you should, and take time off, could make a big difference to your own achievement by coming to school every day.

To make the school even better we have asked it to:

- work very hard to help you to reach standards in writing and mathematics that are as good as the other subjects
- always mark your work so that you fully understand how well you are doing
- work with your parents to make sure that attendance improves.

Thank you all, once again.