

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100169
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	307314
Inspection dates	1–2 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Morris
Headteacher	Mrs C Green
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001
School address	Commerell Street London SE10 9AN
Telephone number	020 8858 4182
Fax number	020 8305 9929

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a small school that serves a very diverse community in which more than 25 nationalities are represented. The largest groups include pupils from Black African, Black British and White British heritages. A high proportion of pupils speak English in addition to their home language. Although pupils' social backgrounds are very wide-ranging, deprivation is much greater than that found in most schools. An unusually high number of pupils join and leave the school at intermittent times throughout the school year. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has recently gained the Healthy School and Eco Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Joseph's is a friendly school with a warm welcoming atmosphere. The school provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education for its pupils and benefits from strong parental and community support. The words of one parent sum the school up well when saying, 'Pupils from all backgrounds and cultures get on very well together'. The exciting multicultural week is a good example of how pupils make a positive contribution to the community.

At the core of the school is the strong commitment to pupils' personal development. Well-established links with the church play an important part in helping pupils to gain good spiritual, moral and social skills. Pastoral care is good and pupils confirm that teachers are 'very caring.' Inspectors agree with the governors when they said, 'Pupils are happy in this close community'. When the headteacher joined the school, three years ago, pupils' behaviour was inadequate. A clear focus on improving this has resulted in pupils behaving well, showing respect and tolerance for each other.

Overall, standards are below average, but from pupils' starting point and considering the high mobility and the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, this represents satisfactory achievement and progress. Since 2006, the school has successfully improved standards in English and science, as well as attendance rates. When combined with the improvement in pupils' behaviour, this demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further. The school is rightly working to improve standards in mathematics, as these are not high enough because pupils are not confident in using their skills for problem solving. The work seen, during the inspection and evidence from teachers' assessment information shows that that standards in mathematics are rising and pupils are on course to reach average standards next year.

The headteacher has spearheaded many recent changes to the management structure, so that the many new managers are widening their roles. This remains an area for improvement, as not all managers check the quality of pupils' learning in lessons and have the opportunity to share good practice by doing demonstration lessons. Managers have good ideas and have already implemented many useful initiatives to improve standards. However, the written improvement plan is not a useful tool in aiding school development. For example, leaders checked pupils' test results in mathematics and concluded that they need more help with problem solving, shape and measurement. However, these elements are not detailed in the plan, even though work has begun to improve these features in lessons.

Pupils learn steadily due to the satisfactory teaching and an interesting curriculum. Leaders recognise that they have several very skilled staff, but yet, there is not enough consistently good teaching, especially in mathematics. Pupils are a real credit to the school. They greatly value the very good range of clubs and visits and these features contribute greatly to their enjoyment of school. Due to good changes in the curriculum, pupils know about how to be healthy and safe.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language has improved well this year. Activities are suitably matched to their needs and additional support helps them to achieve satisfactorily. Despite these improvements, in the school as a whole, the guidance given to pupils about how to improve their learning is inconsistent and targets for pupils' individual development are not precise enough.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When joining the Reception class the children's skills and knowledge are lower than expected for their age, especially in their social and language skills. Children get off to a strong start in the Foundation Stage. They benefit from good teaching and learning and enjoy an interesting curriculum. They make good progress and many reach the goals expected by the time they start Year 1. Children do especially well in gaining social, communication and reading skills.

Relationships are outstanding and as a result, children gain confidence and settle into routines quickly. The children are very keen learners. For example, their infectious enthusiasm for books was evident when they called out 'Can I read' each time the teacher asked for volunteers to help the teacher to read the story of 'Mr Mc Gee'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics, and ensure that priorities in the school's improvement plan focus clearly on helping pupils to develop their problem solving skills.
- Lift the quality of teaching and learning to good. Ensure that all managers check pupils' performance and learning, and share good practice with each other.
- Ensure that pupils know exactly how to improve their work to accelerate their progress, especially in mathematics.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the school as a whole, in the last year, the school has lifted achievement from inadequate to satisfactory and standards have risen from exceptionally low to become below average. Improvement is most evident in English, especially in reading, as pupils quickly learn basic skills and keenly talk about texts. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to edit and extend their writing. This is a result of leaders' introduction of the 'Big Write' project, which is helping pupils of all abilities, especially between Years 3 and 6, to use interesting vocabulary and accurate punctuation. The school is extending this to include Year 2 in the drive to further lift standards in writing. Evidence from the school's assessment information and from most lessons shows that pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved, although this is variable from class to class. The school's data shows that many more pupils are currently on track to reach average standards by the end of Year 6, in 2008, which is a considerable improvement on the very low standards gained in the past.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school as is evident by their improved attendance. They behave well and this is reflected in their respect for each other, good relationships and low rates of exclusions. They consider the needs of others and keenly take responsibility, as evident in the way that pupils look after the school environment as part of the school's eco focus. Pupils regularly write prayers and often say these in different languages; they have a well-informed knowledge of different cultural traditions. Good links with the local community and the many

visits contribute much to pupils' cultural development. They actively express their views and enthusiastically take part in community events. For example, they put together an ethical bid for the next Olympics in conjunction with a project run by the Mayor of London. Pupils speak positively about keeping fit and many attend the sports clubs and walk to school. When all of these positive features are linked with their basic skills in English and science, pupils are suitably prepared for the future, although they are not yet skilled enough in mathematics for their long-term economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils have good attitudes to work. The quality of teaching and learning is variable between lessons and ranges from outstanding to occasionally inadequate. This is why pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. Teaching is often lively, and moves learning on steadily. Overall, learning is better in English than mathematics. Pupils enjoy working with partners and talking about their learning, this helps them to clarify their understanding and develop their speaking skills well. This is particularly helpful for pupils who are new to learning English. In a few mathematics lessons, activities are not always well matched to pupils' capabilities and opportunities for pupils to take an active part in their learning are too limited. As a result, this slows their overall progress, especially when investigating problems in the whole class part of the lesson. The best learning often occurs in the group work activities. Standards are improving in science because the school has increased opportunities for pupils to undertake more investigation work and has employed a specialist teacher.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a wide range of additional activities including a very good range of clubs, visits and residential trips. These help pupils to develop their personal skills successfully. The curriculum promotes good cultural awareness and this leads to strong racial harmony. Specialist teaching in music, art and science contributes to pupils' achievement and enjoyment of learning. As a result of improvement in the writing curriculum, boys are doing better than they did in previous years. There has been an increase in the number of booster classes for mathematics and pupils are beginning to do more problem solving and work to consolidate their understanding of shapes and measurement through practical activities. Steadily improving provision for pupils with dyslexia and a good overall focus on discussion activities helps pupils with learning difficulties to achieve satisfactorily.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Clear guidance about how to behave well have resulted in the school being a harmonious place. Systems to promote improving attendance are effective. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for. Child protection procedures are robust. Good links with local Catholic community and other outside agencies provide positive additional support and expertise. The school supports pupils who join at unusual times in the school year well and as a result, they settle in quickly, gain confidence and achieve as well as other pupils.

The academic guidance provided for pupils is inconsistent and prevents pupils from making good overall progress. In the best lessons, teachers provide good guidance and clear pointers for improvement, but this is not typical across all classes. For example, the quality of marking, pupils' individual targets and, the support given by assistants, varies considerably from class to class. Consequently, not all pupils are clear about how to improve their learning and this is an important factor in why achievement is not yet as good as it could be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors know the school well and place a strong emphasis on pastoral care and pupils' personal development. This is very important, as many pupils come from challenging home circumstances. Leaders have placed a good emphasis on developing English and science and have rightly started work on improving mathematics. Leaders are ambitious for standards to continue to rise and have a wide-ranging improvement plan. However, this plan is not focused sharply enough on mathematics. The school has set ambitious and realistic targets for improvement and are on track to reach these. Middle managers are beginning to develop their roles more fully. Teamwork and staff morale are strong. In their drive to lift teaching and learning from satisfactory to good, there is still more to do to ensure that pupils' learning is evaluated more precisely, especially in mathematics. Governors recognise that they need to have a greater involvement in school improvement planning. They have implemented a good building works programme, which is making the school attractive and more functional.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

13 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, London, SE10 9AN

You may remember that two inspectors came to your school recently to find out how good it is and how well you are doing. Thank you for being so friendly and telling us about your school. We are writing to let you know our findings.

You go to a happy, welcoming and caring school. Your school is satisfactory. This means that most things are suitable for you, some things are particularly good and a few aspects need to be better. You are all happy at school, enjoy learning and value the good range of extra clubs and extra activities. Well done for behaving well, please keep this up. Your school has improved in the last year because your headteacher, staff and governors have been busy trying to make it better for you. These improvements mean that you are reaching the level that we expect in English and science. In particular, you do well in English because the school has improved reading and writing activities and you enjoy these. You make steady progress because teachers help you to understand new things. We are pleased how you are trying to become fit and healthy and especially like the way that you do things to help others in your community. Well done for writing beautiful prayers and for the way that you show respect for each other. You have been improving your attendance, congratulations! Please continue to come to school every day.

Your headteacher, other adults and governors are keen to try to do the best they can for you. We want to help them, so we have asked them to:

- plan improvements better in mathematics, so that you can improve your skills;
- make sure that more lessons are good;
- make sure that you know exactly how to improve your work so that you can make even quicker progress, especially in mathematics.

Please help them with these things by working as hard as you can.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your school. We especially enjoyed the multicultural activities and loved sharing your Polish chocolate, cherry and plum cake.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector