

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100833
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	307500
Inspection date	10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter McGregor

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	163
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Denise Hatch
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Wilcocks
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Gomm Road Lower Road Rotherhithe London SE16 2TY
Telephone number	020 7237 4036
Fax number	020 7231 5191

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than average, as is that for whom English is not their first language. Many pupils come from backgrounds that are less favourable than usual, economically and socially. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Joseph's is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Pupils' achievements and the quality of support and care are excellent. Leadership and management are of high quality, facilitating steady, school-wide improvement, focusing on teaching and learning and pupils' success.

From a low base point on entry, pupils achieve exceptionally well. When they leave the school in Year 6, standards are above average. Although the rate of progress varies somewhat between years, the school's tracking of pupils' work and the way teaching and support staff are deployed ensure that progress is always good and frequently better. Year 2 standards in English and mathematics are broadly average, with an increased number of pupils attaining the higher level 3 in the national assessments in 2007. In Year 6 standards are above average. In the 2006 national tests, results were above average in English, mathematics and science, at both the expected level 4 and the higher level 5; provisional results are higher in 2007. Pupils entitled to free school meals and Black African pupils do particularly well.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Their excellent appreciation of spirituality results from the strong Christian principles which pervade all that takes place. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and assemblies is excellent. They very much enjoy school life and get on very well together. Pupils know what is expected of them and try very hard to live up to these expectations. In discussion, older pupils referred to how they had learnt to behave and control misbehaviour. They said that some younger pupils had not yet fully learnt these messages, as indeed they had not when they were that age! This was borne out by the over-exuberant activity of some younger pupils which staff have to deal with at break and lunchtimes.

Attendance is improving as better school systems take effect and is now above average. Pupils feel extremely safe in school and confide information to staff if they feel unsafe elsewhere. They know how to live healthy lives, appreciating the importance of their two sessions of physical education each week and eating a balanced diet. Pupils commented, 'We don't bring crisps and chocolate to school', and added how much they liked the daily fruit available. They appreciate that they are key members of the school community. Those elected to the school council take their responsibilities seriously. Older pupils - in their yellow jackets so all can recognise them - provide very good support and care for younger pupils at break times. Pupils have very good literacy and numeracy skills in Year 6, and are confident, positive young people, extremely well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

Pupils benefit from some outstanding teaching, where challenging work, explained with clarity and humour, demands much from them. Pupils from all backgrounds and abilities are equally well taught. They gain greatly from a very high level of individual attention. At least two adults are involved teaching each class. Senior managers give additional lessons each morning in literacy and numeracy, and further staff provide small group intervention work. This all helps to maintain the very high rate of progress. Work is usually well matched to pupils' prior learning and modern computer technology is used to interest and motivate them. Pupils mentioned how helpful they find interactive whiteboards, with easy to read writing and reminders of learning objectives. Weaknesses in teaching, which occasionally restrict learning, are a lack of detail in planning and insufficient assessment of ongoing tasks. These result in the pace of work falling and pupils not always focusing on intended learning outcomes.

Teachers' timetables show that the balance of subjects in the curriculum is very good. Literacy has an extremely strong focus, with key words and phrases displayed in every classroom and an expectation of daily reading in each class. The literacy curriculum supports the work of the high proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language very well. Visits and visitors for each class, and focus periods such as a recent science week where the 'rocket man' was much appreciated, add extra relevance and enjoyment. Cross curricular links are still being embedded across subject teaching, with an emphasis on the development of different skills, including in information and communication technology. Extra-curricular activities are good.

The quality of supervision is exceptionally good. Teachers and support staff care greatly about each pupil, knowing and valuing them all. Consistently applied behaviour management strategies, including allocating house points and other rewards, give pupils confidence and add to their enjoyment of learning. Circle time and similar lessons enable pupils to share their feelings, minimising bullying and fears. Improved attendance systems, including first day calls to parents and carers for absences where the cause is unknown, and tighter control of lateness, are proving very effective.

Pupils' progress is followed systematically and rigorously using teacher assessments and more formal tests at half yearly intervals to check that standards are as high as they can be. Central recording means each pupil's rate of progress is measured over time. When a pupil underachieves, individual targets are set, and the highly-developed intervention groups focus on responding to these needs. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds benefit from this excellent approach. Pupils know their targets, such as 'use capital letters and full stops accurately' and 'learn my 12x tables', and find them very helpful.

Leadership and management are extremely effective. The senior team have complementary skills. The vision of a high-achieving Catholic school, where all enjoy working and pupils develop Christian values, is very clear and appreciated by all, including the parents. It is being realised. The school's financial resources are very efficiently and effectively spent on a high number of support staff. They teach small groups of pupils, which in turn enables class teachers to teach below average size groups. This strategy, along with the sophisticated approach to tracking individuals' progress, and good teaching, enables pupils to make excellent progress. School targets, which have not been particularly useful in the past, are now based on good data and challenge the school to achieve greater success. The school has a relatively high proportion of inexperienced staff who are receiving excellent support. The school environment is exceptionally clean and well cared for, including apple trees and gardening plots which the pupils appreciate. All necessary checks are carried out to ensure the safety of pupils. Senior staff evaluate the school's successes accurately and in detail, generating a school improvement plan which guides further developments. Governors are effective and involved in the life of the school. They hold senior staff to account for what is achieved and are developing a good knowledge of school achievement data. The school is working hard at involving parents more in the school community. Excellent links have been made with the many external agencies which support the diverse range of needs of the pupils. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection four years ago and the school has excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In an excellent environment, both indoors and out, children make good progress in their Nursery and Reception classes. The majority attain average standards by the time they move into Year 1. Children enter the Nursery with quite low levels of personal development. Several have

difficulty taking turns or sharing, for example using the 'telephone' between the classroom and outside, but are quickly and effectively taught to separate from their parents and carers on arrival at school. Language and number skills are similarly low on entry. A strong focus on confidence building and self-control, coupled with opportunities to speak accurately and listen carefully, builds a firm basis for future learning. Teaching is good and play-centred, but the needs of individuals are not always as well catered for as they could be by the staff group. Effective, knowledgeable leadership is resulting in a strong team spirit, where experienced and inexperienced colleagues are working very well together. Assessment is rigorous. Curriculum connections through into Year 1 are planned carefully, which is helpful to pupils' learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of all teaching to match that of the best in the school.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	1

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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

17 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, London, SE16 2TY

Thank you very much for helping me to learn about your school. I enjoyed talking to several of you and finding out how well you are doing.

You should be very proud of lots of really good things about your school. You try very hard and make excellent progress in your work. By the time you leave school in Year 6 you are doing very well in English, maths and science. In lessons, and at other times like assemblies, you behave very well indeed. You usually look after each other very well too - it was great to see older pupils in their yellow jackets helping younger pupils during the lunch break. Sometimes a few of you can misbehave but almost all of you learn not to. You told me how important it is to eat properly and get involved in sports, and how you feel extremely safe and happy at school. Most of you come to school on time and regularly. When you leave St Joseph's you are very well prepared for your next schools.

Teaching is good, but some of you aren't learning quite as quickly as others and so we have asked the headteacher to check carefully what's happening in lessons. You have lots of teachers and support staff so you are often taught in quite small groups and this is helping you to do really well. The way teachers check your progress also helps you a lot because you are given extra help when you need it. The staff care a lot about you and try to help you whenever they can.

Your headteacher, supported by his deputy and all the staff, is very, very good at his job. The way the school is run, with a wide range of interesting work, is one of the main reasons why you are so happy and doing so well.

Best wishes,

Peter McGregor

(Lead inspector)