

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101555
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	307735
Inspection date	8 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Wotherspoon HMI

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	
School	441
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Pamela Murphy
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Riley
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
School address	Goodson Road Willesden London NW10 9LS
Telephone number	020 8965 5651
Fax number	020 8961 9022

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well different groups of pupils make progress from year to year, and whether targets are challenging enough; how well teachers use information from assessment and tracking data to plan lessons to meet the needs of all pupils and to challenge more able pupils especially in mathematics in KS1; and how effectively phase leaders are involved in monitoring the quality of provision and in leading changes in order to raise standards. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, assessment records and performance data, planning documentation, observation of staff and pupils at work, and analysis of 124 parents' questionnaires. Discussions were held with staff, a governor, and pupils. 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, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is larger than average and serves an area of social and economic deprivation. A higher than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Approximately one fifth of pupils come from each of the following ethnic groups: White British, White Other, Black Caribbean and Black African. The remaining fifth represents a wide mix of ethnic groups in small numbers. However, the vast majority share their Catholic religious beliefs and values. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language with 39 different languages spoken by pupils in the school. About a sixth of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils identified by the school as having learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than average. The main needs are behavioural, social and emotional, speech, language and communication, and physical. Six children are looked after by the local authority. Most of the school's 30 children in the Nursery transfer to the Reception classes along with those who receive their nursery provision in a variety of private settings in the local area. The school provides after-school care, which was inspected at the same time as the school and judged to be good.

The school has a number of awards: Basic Skills, Activemark, and Inclusion Quality Mark.

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. Pupils achieve well academically and make outstanding progress in their personal development. Parents appreciate the school's strong Catholic ethos and shared values. The vast majority of parents completing an inspection questionnaire expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. Many commented favourably on the leadership of the headteacher and the work of the teachers. The positive view from one parent of a teacher treating 'each child as an individual' was typical. Parents' confidence in the school is rightly justified. The school's outstanding partnerships with external services are highly effective in supporting pupils who need additional help in their learning so that they, too, make good progress. The social and personal support for pupils is of the highest quality. Pupils appreciate the way that adults support them through their personal difficulties and anxieties. They have every confidence that adults will listen to their concerns.

The proportion of pupils who reach the standards expected at the age of seven in reading, writing and mathematics and at eleven in English, mathematics and science is higher than the national figures. However, a smaller proportion attains the higher levels, in particular in mathematics at Key Stage 1. The school has set itself the challenge of increasing the numbers of pupils who reach higher levels and is already taking several well-considered actions, such as reorganising staffing to make better use of their expertise and providing additional support for targeted groups of pupils, to raise standards further. An outstanding capacity to meet this challenge is demonstrated by the sustained, albeit gradual, improvement in the quality of provision and in the outcomes for pupils during the last six years.

The inspection of 2005 noted the rapid improvements made since the appointment of the headteacher and these have been sustained under her outstanding leadership. All staff and governors are strongly committed to providing the best for pupils at St Joseph's. Teamwork is strong and supported very effectively by senior leaders. Governors, too, are not just reliant on the chairperson and headteacher for their information but are increasingly knowledgeable about the school's provision from their regular visits and links with subject leaders. As a result, they provide a high level of support and challenge to the school's leaders. Very thorough monitoring and a systematic approach to evaluating the quality of provision makes use of a broad range of evidence. It includes meticulous analysis of performance data and tracking of pupils' progress every term. This enables senior staff to hold class teachers accountable for what their pupils achieve. It also ensures that all staff can identify very quickly, where pupils may not be making the progress that is expected of them and can put in place a programme of support to get them back on the right track.

Adults and pupils enjoy strong relationships that create an atmosphere conducive to learning and contribute significantly to pupils' very positive attitudes to school life. Lessons are typically well prepared and planned to meet pupils' needs but as the school's own monitoring of mathematics has identified, at times lack challenge for more able pupils. Additional staff provide well targeted support for groups of pupils to help them make progress. Pupils have a good awareness of how to improve their work through the feedback they get from teachers' helpful marking. The regular use of 'talk partners' helps to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills as does teachers' emphasis on pupils giving clear explanations and extended answers to questions. Teachers plan an increasingly broad range of learning activities, as the school is moving away from the strong focus on core subjects to include greater opportunities for creativity across the curriculum. Pupils speak highly of the wide range of additional activities,

clubs, visits, sporting events and opportunities for music that add interest and enjoyment to their learning. They say that 'learning is fun' and that they enjoy 'learning to do things in different ways'. They are developing skills and qualities that will stand them in good stead at the next school and in later life. As a result of the opportunities within school to eat healthily and to take part in a wide range of physical activities, pupils have a strong awareness of how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community in the conscientious way that they undertake their responsibilities, for example as school councillors in helping to appoint the new headteacher, as play leaders to younger children, as 'buddies' to new pupils and as librarians. They are highly aware of their responsibility to others beyond the school through supporting national and international charities. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is exemplary; the few pupils who have difficulties conforming to the school's high expectations are helped to understand how to behave better. This ensures that pupils learn in an environment free from aggression and bullying. Pupils say that such incidents are rare and always dealt with quickly so they feel safe and looked after; they speak warmly of their teachers who 'love and care for you'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start nursery and reception classes with skills, knowledge and understanding well below that expected for their age. Well-established induction procedures including home visits help children to settle well to their new environment. Although they make good progress during their time in the Foundation Stage, many begin Key Stage 1 with early literacy skills that are lower than expected. Staff plan a good balance of adult-led activities and opportunities for child-initiated play across all areas of learning. These are interesting, stimulating and promote children's independence. Staff interact effectively with children, while they play, to develop their vocabulary and to extend their learning. An increased focus on teaching phonics in a systematic way in Reception classes is beginning to make a difference to the children's knowledge of letter sounds and to their skills in reading. It is having less impact on improving children's writing skills because links between reading and writing are not strong enough and opportunities for writing are not frequent enough. Observations and assessment of children's learning are variable in quality in Nursery and between Nursery and Reception. Systems for recording observations are still evolving. Observations are not always sharp enough about what children are learning, and what they need to learn next.

What the school should do to improve further

- Bring together the best practice in observing and assessing children's learning in the Nursery and Reception classes, and ensure that children have both more planned and incidental opportunities to practise writing.
- Raise the proportion of pupils gaining higher levels, especially in mathematics in Key Stage 1, by increasing the level of challenge in lessons.

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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?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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

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	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	1
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

15 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School, London, NW10 9LS

It was great to meet you when I came to inspect your school. Thank you to those children who came to talk to me. Like you, I think you go to a good school. Your parents think so too. Some of you told me that you appreciate the way adults support you when you have personal difficulties and in your work. It was good to see you all getting on so well with each other. You told me that bullying is rare and I could see for myself that every one tries very hard to behave.

It was good to see that you have targets and know how to improve your work. The school agrees with me that more children could reach even higher levels in their work, especially in maths in Key Stage 1. This is an area for improvement. I have also asked that staff in Nursery and Reception work together more closely when they are assessing what children can do and planning what they need to learn next.

All your teachers work hard and they want the best for you. That's why they watch the progress you make very carefully and make sure they help you if you start to fall behind. You told me how much you appreciate the extra staff who help you in class and take you out for group work. I was pleased to hear and see that you enjoy school, especially all the extra activities, clubs, visits, sporting events and musical events. I was impressed with how well you talk to your partner in lessons and this helps you develop confidence.

The conscientious way you do your jobs in school and take responsibility for helping others show how mature you are. You are developing the qualities that will serve you well in your next school and as an adult. It was good to see that you are able to take plenty of exercise and eat healthily in school so that you can learn to keep yourselves healthy and fit.

Keep attending school regularly and work hard. I wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon

Her Majesty's Inspector