

St Joseph's RC Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101803
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	307816
Inspection date	5 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheena MacDonald HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Jones
Headteacher	Ms J Moore
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2003
School address	Crown Dale Upper Norwood London SE19 3NX
Telephone number	020 8670 2385
Fax number	020 8670 0420

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector focused in particular on the progress in mathematics of more able pupils, boys and Black Caribbean pupils; the quality and consistency of the teaching and learning and the clarity of direction provided by school leaders. Evidence was gathered from the school's records, analysis of assessment results, observations of lessons and playtimes, pupils' books, parents' questionnaires, discussions with staff, pupils and governors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is an average sized Roman Catholic infant school whose pupils increasingly come from a diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds. Three quarters of the pupils represent British ethnic minorities, mostly Black Caribbean and Black African. A much higher than average proportion of pupils has English as an additional language and a small number are at the early stages of learning English. Increasing numbers of pupils come from households with high levels of social need, as exemplified by the high proportion eligible for free school meals. Just above average numbers have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of these have speech, language and communication difficulties. The governors have had difficulty recruiting a suitable headteacher and there has been an acting headteacher since July 2006 and an interim headteacher since the beginning of this term. The school has achieved healthy schools award, Basic Skills award and the Silver artsmark.

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 satisfactory school with some strengths. Since July 2006 the school has been without a substantive headteacher and governors have been unable to make a suitable appointment. The uncertainty arising from this is causing concern to staff, governors and parents. One parent commented that the school was coping well despite the lack of a permanent headteacher and this is certainly the case. The staff and governors have done a good job of maintaining the strong ethos embodied in the school's motto, 'we learn to love, we love to learn.' The school is a happy place where pupils enjoy each other's company and enjoy their learning. This is confirmed by all the parents who returned questionnaires who agreed that their children enjoy school, are safe and well cared for. Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well in and out of lessons and relationships are characterised by mutual respect and warmth. Pupils eagerly take on responsibilities such as class helpers and would happily take on more such opportunities. The uncertainties caused by the lack of settled leadership and some changes in staffing have contributed to a drop in the standards achieved by pupils over the past two years. When children start in the Nursery many have skills and knowledge below national expectations. They make good progress in the Foundation stage so that when they join Year 1, pupils are achieving around and often above national expectations. Progress slows to satisfactory for most pupils in Key Stage 1. The standards achieved by the end of Year 2 are now broadly average and there has been a particular decline in the numbers achieving at the higher levels. Teaching assistants and special needs staff provide good support, in lessons and in small groups, for pupils who have learning difficulties and those who have English as additional language. As a result, these pupils make good progress.

The work in pupils' books and seen in lessons indicates that boys and Black Caribbean pupils are making similar progress to other pupils. The dip in attainment last year for these groups was unusual. The mathematics lessons observed during the inspection and the work in pupils' books indicates that pupils, particularly the more able continue to make slower progress in mathematics than in reading and writing. The school has identified mathematics as an area for improvement and has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. Despite this, progress in some lessons is limited because pupils of differing abilities are set the same work. Pupils who need extra help because of language or learning difficulties often cope well with the extra challenge because they benefit from very good support from teaching assistants. More able pupils are not given enough opportunity to extend their learning and therefore do not make as much progress as they are capable of.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. Teachers and teaching assistants are enthusiastic and work well as a team. The personal, social and health education curriculum is good and makes a strong contribution to pupils' good personal development. Relationships are very positive and pupils come to each lesson wanting to do their best. Teachers make sure pupils have a clear idea about what they will be learning and provide good feedback so that they know how well they are doing. Sometimes lessons are over directed by teachers so that opportunities are missed for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, use their initiative and to become more independent in their learning. In whole class sessions, the match of work to pupils' abilities is not always accurate enough so some pupils find it too easy and some find it too hard. The curriculum is well suited to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language, however it does not provide enough interest or challenge to extend more able pupils.

The school places high importance on care, guidance and support and this is evident in its rigorous systems for ensuring pupils' safety. The pastoral care provided for pupils is a strength of the school and pupils feel cared for and confident that they are safe and secure. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about this aspect. One parent commented that since attending the school her child 'has grown socially and in confidence which has been encouraged by her teachers.' The school has good systems to guide and help pupils to be confident about tackling potentially difficult times such as transition into the Nursery and onto the Junior school. Pupils with additional needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties, are well supported and a good range of intervention and support, including good links with external specialist support, is provided to make sure they do well.

Senior staff and governors have ensured good day to day management but the uncertainty of not knowing when a new headteacher would arrive has resulted in the school 'ticking over' rather than moving forward. As one parent rightly commented, 'although my child is happy, I feel the school is not very dynamic.' As a result, leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior leaders have a sound understanding of the main strengths of the school and areas for improvement. However, the links between the systems for self evaluation, assessments of pupil achievement and improvement planning are not strong enough to ensure clarity of purpose and direction. The school does not accurately monitor or evaluate whether actions taken to improve teaching and learning are having the desired impact on pupil attainment and progress. Governors have appointed an experienced interim headteacher to strengthen leadership in the short term and although she has only been in the school for a few weeks, she is already having a positive impact on the school. It is no small achievement that, despite the recent leadership difficulties, the school is a very positive and happy place.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Nursery provides an exciting, welcoming start to the children's education and this good quality continues into the Reception classes. Careful management of children's induction into the nursery and well-organised routines enable children to settle quickly and start to take full advantage of the interesting and lively learning opportunities. Personal development is good and the children play happily together and develop confidence. The staff team plan the learning well and make good use of the outside and indoor areas. During the inspection there were some examples of good learning links across the different activities. For example children enjoyed the story, 'We're going on a Bear Hunt' in literacy where they were looking for sentences, then while some wrote their own sentences, some acted it out in the well prepared outdoor area and some built caves for the bear using plasticine. Good teaching, including skilful adult intervention to extend the children's learning and language, a stimulating curriculum and high quality additional support for those who need it enables all pupils to make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment in mathematics.
- Raise expectations and introduce more challenge in lessons so that all pupils, particularly more able learners, achieve higher standards.
- Ensure pupils have more opportunities in lessons to use their initiative, learn independently and develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Improve the links between assessment, target setting and school improvement planning and sharpen the focus of improvement onto outcomes for pupils.

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 S5 inspection.

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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	No
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	2

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	3
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?	2

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	2
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 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Infant School, London, SE19 3NX

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school. I could see straight away that your school is a place where people 'learn to love and love to learn' just like it says in your motto.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education and some things are good. The governors of your school have been trying very hard for a long time to find someone to be your headteacher. Sadly, the right person just has not turned up yet. This means that some of your senior teachers have had to do a lot of extra work and it has not been easy. They have kept the school running smoothly and made sure that it is a happy place. Here are some things I thought were particularly good.

- St Joseph's is a friendly school where you are happy. Your behaviour is good and everyone gets on together. Well done!
- The adults in your school take very good care of you.
- Your school makes sure that those of you who need it get really good extra help.
- You get a great start to your education in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Your teachers know that you do better in reading and writing than you do in numeracy and they want to help you improve your mathematics. For some of you, the work is too easy when everyone in class is doing the same thing. I have asked your teachers to make sure that the work in lessons really makes all of you think hard so that you make better progress. I have also asked them to give you more chances to talk to each other about your work and think up your own ways of tackling problems. The last thing I have asked the school to do is to try to make better links between all the different ways they have of measuring how well the school is doing and make sure that they keep a close eye on how well you are learning.

Thank you again for being so helpful. I do hope that the special person who will be just the right headteacher for your school comes along soon.

Best wishes,

Sheena MacDonald

HMI