

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103473
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308332
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kirsty Hill
Headteacher	Gerry O'Hara
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	Little Sutton Lane Sutton Coldfield B75 6PB
Telephone number	01213 546270
Fax number	01213 553375

Age group	4-11
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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:

pupils' achievements and their learning

how effectively teachers match work to the needs of the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties

the impact of leadership and management on raising standards and improving pupils' achievements.

The inspector gathered evidence from discussions with staff, pupils and governor representatives, from sampling lessons and from the school's assessments of pupils' progress. The school's self-evaluation document and related documents were scrutinised and samples of pupils' current and previous work were examined. 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 in the report.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is an average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than seen nationally, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The headteacher was appointed in April 2008.

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 provides a good education for its pupils. This judgement matches that of the school, and the leadership team demonstrates a good awareness of what needs to be improved and the capacity to achieve its goals. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their regular and punctual attendance. Children enter the Reception class with skills that are above the level expected for their age. They make good progress throughout the school, so that by the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average. More able pupils, and those who find learning a little difficult, make progress in line with their peers. Pupils' speaking skills are good, and this is aided by the teachers' questioning skills, which encourage pupils to provide extended responses. Pupils demonstrate good writing skills, producing texts in a range of styles and genres. Information and communication technology skills are good and pupils confidently use computers for a wide range of research activities.

Teaching and learning are good, particularly in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to question pupils effectively. They have very high expectations of the pupils, who respond and behave well. Work is planned well so that it challenges pupils of all abilities. Pupils present their work neatly and always try their best. Work is marked regularly and in the best examples, there is clear guidance as to how they might improve their work. However, this process is not consistent, nor is the way in which teachers use day-to-day assessment to match work to the pupils' individual targets. Consequently, whilst pupils achieve well, there are occasions when progress could be accelerated further. There is a strong focus on the core subjects of English and mathematics and the satisfactory curriculum covers all the required subjects in sufficient depth. However, it does not provide opportunities for the pupils to discover and find out things for themselves, particularly during science lessons. They learn the facts but do not always have the excitement and enjoyment that goes with 'finding out for themselves'. The leadership has rightly recognised the need to make the curriculum more exciting and interesting.

Pupils are well looked after in all aspects of school life. They are happy, feel safe and are at ease in approaching staff should they have a problem, for instance, when bullying has occurred. Improved tracking and assessment of the pupils' performance is providing the leadership with a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving. Effective use is made of this information to provide additional support, particularly for the more able pupils. Whilst good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties during withdrawal sessions, the same level of support is not always available during whole-class activities. Pupils have learning targets but, in some instances, they are too general, making it difficult to link them to day-to-day assessments.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils particularly enjoy taking part in the good range of sporting and physical activities that is available after school. This participation, together with their good awareness of eating well and how to keep safe, helps them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The pupils thoroughly enjoy the opportunities for dance and parents really appreciated the 'Bollywood Dance' put on by pupils from Years 2 and 5. The staff in the Reception class work hard to develop the children's independence. Staff occasionally miss opportunities to develop this independence further with older pupils. Pupils acquire many good skills that will serve them well in later life, for example, their involvement in charitable fund-raising activities and participation in the Rotary Club's citizenship award. Their literacy and numeracy skills and good social skills prepare them well for the future. The school works

hard and is successful in raising the pupils' awareness of life in a multicultural society through its social education programme.

Leadership and management are good. The evidence that it is able to maintain its standards is evident in the results seen in national tests, which have been well above average year on year. Governors have become much more involved in school, enabling them to keep a close check on the progress being made. Regular discussions take place with senior staff and subject leaders, providing governors with an opportunity to challenge the school to improve further. In his short time at the school, the headteacher has identified the areas for improvement that will build upon the school's good academic tradition. The leadership team is providing a good steer. There are good self-assessment systems in place that are based securely on the monitoring of pupils' progress, regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and support to rectify weaknesses. The leadership team knows exactly where the strengths in teaching and learning lie and is now beginning to disseminate good practice. Most parents are very supportive of the school, although a small minority feel that communication from the school is not as good as it should be. The school acknowledges this shortcoming and has begun to address the issue with regular newsletters.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the Reception class are good, as is the quality of teaching. Children have a good start to their education because staff have a clear understanding of the developmental needs of young children. Children achieve well so that on entry to Year 1 standards are above average in all areas of learning. There are clear assessment procedures in place and staff use this information well to ensure children make good progress. There is a suitable emphasis on developing the children's basic skills and the recent introduction of a programme of linking sounds and letters has generated much enthusiasm amongst the children. There are good opportunities for them to widen their experiences through physical and creative activities. The opportunity for outdoor play activity, however, is inhibited in inclement weather because of the limited space available and the lack of a covered area. Plans to improve these facilities are at an advanced stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the day-to-day use of assessment and the quality of marking of work so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how they might improve.
- Make the curriculum more interesting and exciting and provide pupils with more opportunities to carry out their own investigations in subjects such as science.

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

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?	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	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	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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

8 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Sutton Coldfield B75 6PB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. You were very polite and friendly. I enjoyed talking to you and you told me a lot about your school. Your school is providing you with a good education.

This is what I found out about your school

- You make good progress in the Reception class, gain in confidence and enjoy the activities. You make good progress throughout the rest of the school and attain standards that are well above those seen in other schools.
- You behave well, enjoy school and when given the opportunity, take responsibility well.
- Adults are kind and caring and they look after you well.
- You are taught all the subjects you should be. The school is good at teaching you about the importance of staying safe and healthy and I am pleased you enjoy taking part in the increasing range of sporting activities and that you try to eat healthily.

What I have asked your school to do now

- Look closely at how your work is marked, and how staff use information that tells them how well you are doing.
- Make your work more exciting and interesting and give you opportunities in lessons such as science to find things out for yourself.

I enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. I hope you help your teachers by continuing to work hard. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr Paul Edwards Lead inspector

Annex B

8 May 2008

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Lead inspector