

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104472
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	308610
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2007
Reporting inspector	David Blackburne

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Mulcahey
Headteacher	Mr C Newstead
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2003
School address	Edenfield Crescent Huyton Liverpool Merseyside L36 6DS
Telephone number	0151 4894072
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary is a smaller than average primary school serving an area of mixed housing in the Parish of St Aidan's. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is very low. A higher than average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. The school has been awarded the Activemark.

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 in which pupils achieve well and feel happy and safe because staff care effectively for the needs of individuals. From a below average starting point in Reception, pupils make good progress at each stage of their primary education. By the end of Year 6 standards are above average. Achievement is good because pupils are well taught.

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well and good relationships are a feature of the school. This helps the school to be a happy place and hence pupils enjoy their education. They are sure that bullying and racism are not problems in their school and have every confidence in the headteacher and staff ensuring that this remains the case. Pupils show good commitment to the wider community by their efforts in helping local, national and international charities through donations and fundraising. Pupils' better than average standards, the positive way they work together and the involvement of some in enterprise projects, helps them to develop skills that will contribute well to their future economic well-being.

Teaching is good overall and lessons are well planned to have a clear focus and to cater for the needs of different pupils. In the strongest lessons pupils work at a brisk pace and move swiftly from one activity to another being fully engaged in their work at all times. Where teaching is sometimes less strong the pace of pupils' work is slower and consequently their learning slows. In many lessons the transition from one activity to another is not sharp and valuable learning time and concentration are lost. This hinders pupils' progress in these lessons.

Pupils benefit from a good curriculum which caters for their learning needs and contributes to their enjoyment of school. In addition to helping them make good progress, it contributes well to their personal development by teaching them how to make healthy choices and by giving them responsibility within the school community. The increasing number of educational visits and visiting speakers make the school an exciting place to be and stimulate pupils to do well.

Care, support and guidance are good. Pupils are valued as individuals and their many needs are provided for by the committed staff in this caring school. As a result, pupils feel secure and happy and are helped to develop into well rounded individuals. Pupils are guided well in their learning and this leads them to do well.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has high expectations for the school and everyone in it. He ensures that everyone does their best to achieve as well as they can. New teams of staff, made up of existing and recently appointed teachers, ensure that important areas of pupils' education and development are suitably catered for. The school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with standards below national expectations in most areas of learning. Owing to good teaching children make good progress overall so that their attainment is broadly in line with national expectations by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children are presented with a wide range of interesting activities, some of which are led by their teachers. They respond enthusiastically and increasingly show a readiness to learn more formally. Since the last inspection a number of improvements to resources have taken place and a strong team of committed staff work hard to lead the department forward. They are aware of the need to

develop the outdoor area further and recognise that further understanding of Foundation Stage data would be of benefit to the whole team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure smooth and swift transition from one activity to another in lessons so as to make best use of time to promote pupils' learning and improve their progress.
- Ensure that the quality of all teaching matches that of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with attainment broadly in line with national expectations. They build on the good foundations laid down in Reception and make good progress as they move through the school. By Year 6 standards are above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007 did particularly well overall and achieved a high standard in science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, making similarly good progress to their classmates and performing better than similar groups nationally. High-attaining pupils make good progress and more pupils attained the higher National Curriculum Level 5 by the end of Year 6 in 2007 in English, mathematics and science tests than in previous years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know right from wrong and mix well together both in class and on the playground. Pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect, which they use well. They have a good understanding of other cultures and faiths and learn tolerance as a result. Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe in school and know how to find help if they are worried or in trouble. As one pupil said, 'I would go to the teachers or the Bully Busters if I had a problem.' Pupils make healthy choices about what they eat and take a lot of exercise both in physical education (PE) lessons and taking part in energetic games at playtime. This has recently earned the school the well deserved Activemark. Pupils clearly enjoy school. However, despite the school trying many ways to improve it, attendance remains satisfactory, being broadly in line with national averages. Pupils contribute well to their school community, with many of them taking responsibilities in school including being members of the school council and acting as monitors or play leaders.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is most effective when lessons move at a fast pace, keeping pupils interested and giving fewer opportunities for distraction. In more effective lessons teachers did not talk for too long and all pupils were given the opportunity to contribute. A range of activities was presented in order to help pupils meet their clearly displayed learning objectives. Pupils work well together and in one lesson they were encouraged to 'phone a friend' for help and support when necessary. A thorough marking system is in place. Work is marked regularly and pupils' efforts are praised. When marking is at its most effective it gives a clear indication of the next steps which the pupil must take to improve. However, this is not yet evident throughout the

school. In a number of lessons children were too slow to change from one activity to another and valuable learning time was lost.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school continues to place a strong and effective emphasis upon English, mathematics and science and this is reflected in pupils' above average standards in these subjects. The curriculum has widened since the last inspection to embrace the 'Excellence and Enjoyment' initiative. As a result, most pupils really enjoy most lessons. A wide range of visits such as meeting Father Christmas in a forest and a day trip to a local Premiership football club as a reward for improved punctuality now take place. One of the most popular trips is the Year 6 residential visit to an outdoor activity centre which provides pupils with good opportunities for the development of their personal and social education. The range and number of visitors into school has also increased resulting in 'themed days' including writing through art, dance and drama and a Shakespeare Festival. The school provides quality specialists in music tuition, in Key Stage 2 and PE across the whole school, which raises standards and prepares pupils well for the high school. The extra-curricular programme has developed significantly since the last inspection and an increasing number of pupils take part.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff team, which includes a newly appointed special needs coordinator and a learning mentor, know the pupils and their families well and are committed to their education and welfare. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and their needs are met, ensuring their consistently good progress. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet current government requirements. Links with the local authority and other external agencies are strong. The governors take their responsibilities towards the health and safety of the school very seriously, ensuring a safe and well maintained environment. Since the last inspection a good tracking system has been implemented that has set high expectations and has alerted staff to underperformance. This has recently been further improved and now checks pupils' progress each term.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership. He is determined to raise standards further and is developing new, enthusiastic teams to help him to do this. These new teams are putting in place plans designed to improve pupils' progress. However, these plans have not been working for long enough to show their full effect. The headteacher aims for 'everyone in school to achieve their best'. Teachers, governors, parents and pupils are involved in the self-evaluation process, which correctly identifies the school's strengths and appropriate areas for development. The school has forged many strong links with outside agencies for the benefit of the pupils and their families and many training opportunities are provided for parents through a link with a local college. Parents are supportive of the school and one represented their views well when saying, 'The school is a caring and happy place and we're really pleased with our child's achievements.' Resources are used well in school to give pupils access to specialist staff when necessary and the benefit of modern interactive computer technology which helps to make

lessons more stimulating. Governors are very supportive of the school and its headteacher and are willing to challenge the school about aspects of its performance in order to bring about improvement.

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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	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	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?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing on behalf of the inspectors to thank you for the special welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. Everyone was very polite and helpful in answering our questions to help us in our work.

We found your school to be a caring place which gives you a good education. Your school is led and managed well by your headteacher. You are well looked after by the school and care is taken to see that you do not come to harm.

You are growing up well and try hard in your lessons. Your behaviour is good and you know that if anyone has a problem your teachers will help you to sort it out. You make many good choices about the food you eat and many of you spend a lot of your time getting plenty of exercise.

You told us that you enjoy school and we thought that most of your lessons were good. We have told your teachers that you would do even better at school if all your lessons were as good as the best ones. It takes too long for some of you to do as you are asked to in class. You all need to be much quicker to settle down when you change from one part of the lesson to another so that you do not waste your learning time or stop concentrating on your work.

We were very impressed by the way you help each other in school by taking on responsibilities and try to help other people in need by collecting money for charity.

Thank you once again for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and help St Joseph's to become an even better school.