

St Joseph's Stockport Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106122
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309035
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	114
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maura Keep
Headteacher	Mrs Debra Connell
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Etchells Street St Petersgate Stockport Cheshire SK1 1EF

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Inspection number	309035

Telephone number
Fax number

0161 480 5029
0161 480 5029

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	19-20 November 2008
Inspection number	309035

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average sized school is situated in the town centre. Pupils are taught in five classes: Reception and Year 1, Year 1 and Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4, Year 4 and Year 5, and Year 6. It serves an area of increasing social and economic disadvantage, which is reflected in the high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is through its Reception class. It holds the National Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. There is a feeling of optimism in it and the recently appointed headteacher and her staff are rightly proud of the 'buzz' around the school. Leadership and management are good. The leadership team, staff and governors alike are energised and committed to her vision to continue to improve practice and to raise standards so that all pupils can achieve their best. The substantial improvement made since the previous inspection is amply demonstrated in pupils' good personal development and, increasingly, in their academic achievement, which is also good. Pupils are happy, know how to keep safe and enjoy school. The view of a parent summed up those of many, 'The school is going from strength to strength.'

From starting points at the expected levels when children enter the Reception, they make good progress. This is built on well in Key Stage 1. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, with particularly high levels in reading. Good teaching provides pupils with this firm foundation for learning, thus aiding their readiness for the further development of basic skills at Key Stage 2. The pace of pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has quickened over the last two years as they gain steadily in confidence and independence. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well. Standards are above average in English and science and broadly average in mathematics. Pupils do best in reading and least well in solving numerical problems, where initiatives to improve standards are at an early stage. The school very quickly identifies pupils' additional learning needs and the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress alongside their classmates.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' all-round development. It is focused successfully on promoting pupils' readiness to learn, on improving their basic skills and successfully offers opportunities for pupils to use their skills in other subjects, for example in history. A good example is the recent celebration of the school's 150th anniversary. Pupils benefit from the teaching of French and Italian. There is a good variety of enrichment, including theme weeks, which are popular with pupils. Teaching is good. Teachers manage pupils very well and establish strong relationships with them. Consequently, pupils are responsive and try hard to concentrate and persevere in their work. Care and welfare arrangements, to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs and to ensure their well-being, are of good quality and these promote pupils' positive attitudes well. The school's systems for monitoring pupils' progress and identifying pupils who would benefit from extra support are effective in supporting their learning, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school benefits from good quality leadership and management. The headteacher recognises the talents and abilities of her staff and actively engages them in effectively monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. As a result, the school is improving quickly. Middle leaders have acquired the experience to take sharp action to raise standards in their subjects. The school improvement plan does not sufficiently pinpoint exact standards and pupils' achievement as goals over a given period of time to enable teachers to contribute to planned success. Governors hold the school to account well. The school provides good value for money and is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS provides a good education for children. The Reception class includes some Year 1 pupils. The school uses the opportunity to give additional support to the older children until they are ready to move to the Year 1/Year 2 class. Children join Reception with skills which are at the levels expected in all areas of learning. Staff initially and successfully emphasise developing children's skills through structured activities with a good balance of teacher-led and child-selected activities. Adults know the children well and, as they develop self-confidence, children make good use of opportunities to extend their learning through increased independence in creative play, including the well used outdoor area. By the end of Reception the majority of children reach the levels expected for their age and many exceed them. The quality of teaching is good and children's learning is well managed. A sharpened focus on enabling children to link letters and sounds helps them to approach reading and writing confidently. The roles and responsibilities of support staff are clearly defined and all work effectively as a team in carrying out assessments to plan for the next steps in children's learning. Welfare arrangements are good. Parents are appreciative of the good start their children are given, as a result of the well organised induction process. Effective leadership and management mean that children's achievement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress of pupils in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that school improvement planning has precise and challenging academic goals to sustain high levels of achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils build well on their earlier attainment as they progress through the school. They make successful steps in their learning in Key Stage 1 and acquire the positive attitudes towards learning that underpin their good progress. By the end of Year 2 standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. The good progress made by pupils continues through Key Stage 2 and is accelerated further in Year 6. Consequently, standards by the end of Year 6 have improved substantially in the last two years and are above average in English and science and average in mathematics. A determined focus on writing has led to a significant improvement in standards. The school has put in place measures to improve further pupils' standards in mathematics and while these are having a good impact on developing problem-solving skills, the pace of progress is not as brisk as that in English and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against clear targets in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is good. The school's strong faith ethos places a clear emphasis on pupils' personal development and their well-being. Pupils behave well and treat each other considerately. They relate well to the staff, whom they respect highly. They respond very positively to the well structured opportunities the school provides to enable them to take initiative and responsibility in the school community. Examples of these are opportunities to become play leaders, 'buddies' and school councillors. Pupils in these roles

carry out their duties very reliably and make a significant contribution to the other pupils' sense of security and well-being in school. The school's contribution to its local community is good, and it has established links with a school in New Zealand serving a predominantly Maori population. Pupils report that they enjoy school a lot. Attendance is satisfactory. As a result of involvement in the Healthy Schools programme, pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and of how to stay safe. Overall, they develop well the skills they need, including information and communication technology (ICT), to succeed in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage pupils well and this fosters pupils' motivation and enjoyment of learning. Pupils are keen to respond and their self-esteem is boosted by the ready recognition of their efforts and by encouragement from staff. Teachers maintain an effective balance between leading pupils' learning and providing interesting activities to enable pupils to learn well independently. The outcomes of the monitoring of progress are used well to plan lessons effectively, to ensure that pupils understand the purpose of their learning and to cater for the needs of pupils of all abilities. Teaching is consistently good and supports the good achievement of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants, whose contributions are well planned. Marking is of good quality and supports pupils' learning well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well and contributes most effectively to their personal development. A successful emphasis on basic skills enables pupils to make good progress in reading and writing to achieve well in English, science and ICT. Well planned opportunities enable pupils to use their skills in other subjects. Such opportunities, in writing in particular, have contributed to improved standards. Weekly Italian lessons and opportunities to learn French provide a valuable extra dimension to pupils' learning. The school's location provides good opportunities to learn about local culture and history. Links with a Maori school in New Zealand provide an example of learning about other cultures. Comprehensive support for pupils with learning difficulties and specialist teaching for those with disabilities ensure that these pupils make good progress. There is a good range of enrichment, including dance, which is well supported and enjoyed by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pastoral care and support, and academic guidance, are good. Pupils thrive and feel safe because a strong ethos founded on clear values nurtures them to become confident and caring citizens. Parents' questionnaires overwhelmingly support this view and parents comment, 'The school has a loving, caring atmosphere. It embraces all children no matter what their capabilities are.' Skilled and experienced teaching assistants provide high quality support for the most vulnerable pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements. Good systems are in place to monitor pupils' progress, quickly identify any underachievement and provide the most appropriate support. Individual targets

are set for English and mathematics, and assessment and marking are helpful in guiding pupils towards areas for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher guides colleagues by example, providing firm, well organised and effective leadership, with a sharp focus on raising standards. Good, detailed systems for monitoring pupils' progress are in place and, consequently, leaders have a secure knowledge of priorities and understand well the strengths and weaknesses in standards reached by pupils. While this is demonstrated in the schools accurate self-evaluation, clear academic targets are not expressed clearly in the school improvement plan. Subject leaders have grown into their posts and are steadily acquiring a sharper overview of their subjects. Resources, including staff, are thoughtfully deployed to improve outcomes for pupils. Recent improvements in Key Stage 2 are fully reflected in the rise in pupils' academic standards and achievement. Leaders acknowledge, however, there is more work to be done to improve achievement in mathematics. Governors are well informed about school development and provide good support and challenge to senior leaders. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet current requirements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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	3
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

Inspection of St Joseph's Stockport Catholic Primary School, Stockport, SK1 1EF

I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent in your school. The warmth of your welcome, your courtesy and help were very much appreciated. I enjoyed speaking with your school council and I agree with you that your school is good. I mentioned to you that I would tell you about the main findings from the inspection.

The particularly good things about your school are:

- the good start children get in Reception
- the good care, support and guidance you are given to help you do well in your learning and to be caring young citizens
- the good progress you make in your studies
- your good behaviour and attitudes that help to ensure that your school is a happy, safe and secure place to be
- the good teaching, learning and the exciting and interesting curriculum
- the hard and willing work you do to help and care for each other and make a very good contribution to the life of your school
- the good leadership and management from your headteacher and other staff, which is appreciated by your parents.

To help make your school even better, I have asked your teachers to look at ways of helping you to make progress in mathematics as quickly as you do in English and science. I have also asked them to include academic targets in the school's improvement plan.

I know that you will want to play a full part by continuing to follow your teachers' advice and guidance very closely. My very best wishes to you and good luck for the future.