

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107153
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	309330
Inspection date	16 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	219
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	Mr M Egan
Headteacher	Mrs S Armitage
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Joseph's Road Handsworth Sheffield South Yorkshire S13 9AT

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	16 September 2008
Inspection number	309330

Telephone number
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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: achievement and standards; teaching and learning; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data and the school's own assessments of pupils' standards and progress; documentation provided by the school; discussions with the headteacher, other school leaders, governors and pupils; observations of the school at work; and questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but evidence was gathered which is referred to in the report.

Description of the school

This average size school takes pupils from a wide area, which includes areas of significant social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion at early stages of learning to speak English is below that typically found. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. The school has the Activemark award and Healthy Schools status. Over the past few years the school has experienced high levels of staff turnover and change.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's effectiveness is satisfactory. Faced with uncharacteristically high levels of teacher absence and turnover in the last few years, which have been beyond the school's control, the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have worked hard to minimise the impact on pupils' well-being and achievement. They have been successful in ensuring that the quality of care and support provided to pupils remains good so that pupils are developing well personally. The situation has taken its toll on some other aspects of the school however, resulting in pupils' achievement being satisfactory rather than good. The senior leadership team has remained stable during this period and now the school also has a stable complement of teachers it is well placed to move forward and to escalate the rate of progress.

As a result of good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils enter Year 1 with attainment broadly in line with expectations for their age, although standards are below average in writing. They reach average standards overall at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards in writing generally continue to lag behind those of other subjects. In 2008, provisional results of national assessments and tests were maintained on several measures when compared to the previous year, but there was a decline in standards in writing across the school. The school knows this is a key area it needs to tackle and has quickly produced a plan which details the action to be taken. The achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory overall. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally progress as well as their peers. However, achievement is variable across the school, reflecting, in part, the impact of the staffing difficulties on different classes. The school sets challenging targets and it meets some, but not all of them.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, albeit variable, with some that is good. Across the school there are positive relationships between teachers and pupils, which help establish a supportive and productive climate for learning. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and plan appropriate tasks and strategies. Account is taken of the needs of different groups of pupils, predominantly in English and mathematics. Teaching assistants generally make a valuable contribution to helping pupils and the groups they are supporting make satisfactory progress. Although some teaching is based on interesting and appropriately challenging work, this is not always the case and occasionally work is not explained in a way that helps pupils to understand the concepts being taught. Pupils are keen to learn and generally enjoy the full range of subjects, especially when they are actively or practically involved. They particularly like art and information and communication technology. The latter is a reflection of the improvements made to that curriculum area since it was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are good features. The headteacher, supported well by the senior leadership team, provides clear direction and this has helped to steer the school through its recent upheavals. The commitment to pupils and their well-being has remained central. Arrangements to keep pupils safe and well supported are in place and there is an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere. As a result pupils feel very valued as individuals. 'We are treated all the same in our school, wherever we come from,' was a typical view expressed by a pupil. Relationships between girls and boys of all groups are harmonious. Most pupils behave well and attendance is above average. Statutory policies and procedures are in place and the school functions efficiently. Nevertheless, there are areas which require further development. For example, a reasonable amount of monitoring of teaching and learning takes

place, especially by the headteacher. However, not all subject leaders, some of whom are relatively new in post, are yet involved. Some records of monitoring are descriptive rather than evaluating the evidence to identify points for improvement. Pupils' progress is monitored and analysed but the information is not held in an easily accessible form.

Governors are very committed to the school and have taken some positive steps to increase their knowledge and understanding of it so as to provide better support. However, they are not well enough informed about the standards and achievement of pupils. The school works in good partnership with its local community to forge positive relationships and extend its provision. It promotes community cohesion and the audit it has carried out in this area identifies more that can be done to develop this aspect of its work. The large majority of parents who returned the questionnaire were positive about the school, although a small minority expressed some concerns, mainly related to the impact of the staffing situation and aspects of communication with them. Some of the judgements the school made about its effectiveness before the inspection, such as those about pupils' personal development and the care and support it provides were accurate. Some other areas of self assessment were over-generous because there was a concentration on the fact that the staffing difficulties are now resolved, rather than the fact that the impact of them has not yet been fully compensated for. Nevertheless, the school knows its strengths and weaknesses clearly. It is now in a good position to build on the developments it has been able to make since its last inspection and to tackle the areas that require further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), where there has been less disruption to staffing, provision is good. A welcoming and supportive atmosphere results in children settling in quickly and they establish positive relationships with adults and other children. Good attention is paid to ensuring their welfare and, as a result, children are happy and grow in confidence. Individuals' attainment on entry varies, but overall attainment is below typical expectations with standards in communication, language and literacy, especially writing, lower than in other areas. Planning takes account of these weaknesses, with good efforts being made to promote children's speaking and listening through engaging them in focussed conversation as they play. The EYFS leader is aware of the need to further promote their writing skills. Children respond well to adults and enthusiastically participate in the varied activities. Their individual needs are assessed and priorities for their learning identified. These are then taken into account by staff when interacting with children and there are plans to use them to identify more specific activities for individuals. As a result of the good provision children progress well during the EYFS and most attain expected levels by the time they leave, although fewer do so in writing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement, especially in writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching so it provides a more consistent level of challenge and interest to ensure all pupils understand their work and learn effectively.
- Improve leadership and management arrangements, especially for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and ensure leaders and managers at all levels are fully involved.

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 section 5 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	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?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
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?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

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

Thank you very much for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school earlier this week. I enjoyed talking with and looking at your work. I would like to let you know my findings about your school.

Your school looks after and supports you well, and so your personal development is good. You enjoy school and get on well with the staff. It was particularly good to see that all groups of pupils play and work well with each other. You told me that your school treats you all equally. You attend well and most of you behave well too. You told me that you particularly like art and information and communication technology.

You will know that there have been a lot of staff changes over the past few years and this has affected your learning in some classes. As a result your progress is satisfactory at the moment rather than good. You reach the standards expected for your age, although standards in writing are lower than in other areas. Teaching is satisfactory overall: sometimes it is good, especially when teachers explain the work in a way that helps you understand it. Your headteacher and other senior leaders, as well as the school governors, have worked hard to try to ensure the school is effective for you at the same time as managing the staff changes.

There are three things I have asked the school to do to help make it better for you. These are: to raise the standards you reach and improve your achievement, especially in writing; to improve teaching so you all learn equally well; and to improve leadership and management arrangements, making sure all leaders play a part in checking how effective the school is.

You can help your teachers by continuing to do what you are doing now - working hard, attending regularly and getting on well with everyone.

I wish you and your school well for the future.