

St Josephs Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112350
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310863
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Jackie Barnes

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)	58
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 John Noake
Headteacher	Mrs Andrea Worthington (Acting head)
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Yeathouse Road Frizington Cumbria CA26 3PX
Telephone number	01946 810702

Age group	4–11
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small village school in an area of social and economic disadvantage. As a church school, it has well established links with its faith community and also with the cluster of extended services in the local community. A higher than usual proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. All pupils are from White British backgrounds and most live within walking distance. They are taught in three classes, one of which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage children. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than usual. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher. A permanent headteacher has been appointed from September 2009.

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, full of laughter and fun, underpinned by effective procedures that enable pupils to achieve well in their personal and academic development. The school community provides a supportive environment for all pupils and they respond with excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Parents' confidence in the school is high. They rightly feel their children enjoy school and are happy; they are also appreciative of recent improvements in the environment of the school. The outstanding leadership and management of the acting headteacher, with the support of the governing body and staff, has resulted in the many changes made over the last year being successfully implemented.

Pupils start school with attainment which is often well below that expected for their age. By Year 6, standards are broadly average, with some variability from year-to-year. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the children make rapid progress, and children's abilities are much closer to those expected by the time they enter Year 1. In Years 1 and 2, good progress continues and standards by the end of Year 2 are average. In Years 3 to 6, progress is more variable, with the younger pupils making the best progress as they build well on their previous learning. In Years 5 and 6, many of the older pupils, especially the most able, have lost some ground over time in their learning but are now catching up. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, mainly because the care and support they receive is consistently good.

From the time pupils start school, they clearly enjoy learning, and are keen to do even better in their work. Almost all have good attendance records. The school ethos is that of a large, supportive family which values every child. The mixed ages in each class, and the opportunities to meet as a community at lunchtimes and assemblies, provide excellent opportunities for the pupils to learn from each other and develop wide-ranging friendships. Personal development is well supported by the curriculum programmes, and by the day-to-day experiences of respect and tolerance of which the school is rightly proud. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy, and they feel safe in school. They make a good contribution to the school community through the active school council and their willingness to share their own views. They understand that differences between people are something to celebrate, although their direct knowledge of other cultures is limited. Their good personal skills, especially their independence and ability to work with others, prepare them well for the future.

Recent improvements in teaching and learning have effectively engaged pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning. Lessons are usually stimulating and well managed, with examples of outstanding lessons where the pupils of different ages and abilities work at a challenging pace that is well matched to their needs. In all lessons, the good organisation and mutual respect helps pupils to work harmoniously at different tasks, but sometimes their work is either too hard for some or too easy for others and this slows progress, especially for some older, more able pupils. The curriculum is broad and practical which captures pupils' interest and promotes their learning, especially for the youngest pupils and those with learning difficulties. Staff take very good care of pupils, and support is readily available when needed. Most pupils have good guidance on how to improve their work. The new tracking system provides very useful information on individual pupils' progress but does not readily provide such information across the year groups. This limits its usefulness as part of school self-evaluation, which otherwise is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. The number of children starting school each year is small. Generally the children enter with skills well below those expected for their age, although there are considerable differences between the attainment of individual children and between each year's intakes. The children in the Reception Year are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils, and some from Year 2. This arrangement works very well. Personal development is outstanding. The children are happy, enthusiastic and keen to learn. They have the example of the older pupils to follow and gain much from this contact, particularly in developing both their social skills and their work in literacy and numeracy. Almost all children make good progress in all areas of learning, especially in language and personal skills, which are sometimes very weak when the children start school. By the time they enter Year 1, standards overall are broadly average.

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. The staff have a good understanding of the age group and know the children well. Each child's learning needs and preferences are very carefully considered and planned, with a well matched range of support and independent activities. The children are exceptionally confident, knowing that the staff are watchful of their safety, care and progress. They are eager to share their successes and ideas. Parents typically say they 'cannot believe the progress' their child is making. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is very effective because the lead teacher ensures that each child's needs, welfare and progress are regularly checked, and that teaching and activities encourage the children to enjoy challenges and to develop their independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6, especially for the more able pupils.
- Ensure work for each age group in the mixed-age classes is well matched to their age and ability.
- Develop the current tracking system so it provides more accessible information about the progress of groups of pupils and year groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The number of pupils taking national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 in any one year is often very small, therefore results can fluctuate widely depending on the different abilities in each year group. However, an analysis of the school's results over time shows standards were broadly average at the end of Years 2 and 6. The results for Year 6 in 2007 dipped significantly to below average. Teachers' assessments indicate that attainment in the current year has improved significantly and by the end of the year is on track to be at least average in most year groups. Years 5 and 6 have a legacy of previous underachievement which has slowed their progress towards higher standards. Nevertheless, achievement is good. Pupils' progress has accelerated recently, mainly as a result of improvements in teaching and learning. Very good progress is being made by many pupils in Years 3 and 4 in writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well throughout the school, and parents are very positive about the improvements they see.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy, confident and enjoy school. They are keen to learn, polite and energetic. Almost all have good attendance. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils respond well to the school's close knit community and take good care of each other. Those with responsibilities in school, such as being play leaders, are proud of their roles and conscientious. Pupils feel safe and are very trusting of staff and each other. As a result, they readily ask for help in lessons, support others where they see a need, and work very well together in pairs and groups. They know how to keep safe and healthy, and know what to do if someone makes them feel uncomfortable. They make good use of the clubs and physical activities offered after school. Their social, moral, spiritual development and cultural development is good. They have respect for differences in people and good self-awareness, although their knowledge of ethnic and cultural diversity in Britain is more limited. They enjoy making a good contribution to the local community through involvement with church activities, and contact with other schools in the local cluster.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but it varies from outstanding to satisfactory. Most lessons are stimulating and practical. The supportive relationships that characterise the school provide a positive climate for learning and, together with good classroom management skills, ensure the good behaviour that enables pupils to work effectively in groups and practical activities. Pupils are clear about what they are going to learn in each session. In the best lessons, good planning allows teachers to sustain the teaching and learning in small groups without interruption, and enables the other pupils to work independently. As a result, pupils of different ages and abilities can work successfully on tasks that are usually well matched to their specific needs. Occasionally, the teaching for the most able pupils does not provide the challenge they need to make the best progress they can. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning and are particularly effective when supporting those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. New assessment procedures for checking pupils' progress are in place and generally used well. Marking of work often provides useful prompts that help pupils recognise what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum supports learning well. There is a good balance of creative, academic and physical activity which maintains variety in the pupils' day and adds to their enjoyment. The provision for pupils' with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very well integrated with lessons and they make good progress. The provision for the more able pupils sustains their interest well but occasionally lacks the challenge they need in English and mathematics, especially in the older year groups. The programmes for the pupils' personal, social and health education are very effective because they are set within day-to-day practical experiences that reinforce the pupils' understanding, especially of personal worth and respect for others. Pupils are enthusiastic about additional activities after school, which include a wide range of physical and creative experiences and are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff take great care of pupils. All the required procedures for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are in place. The school ethos, based on its religious foundation, is friendly and helpful. Each child is valued, and recognises this to be the case. This results in exceptionally confident relationships which encourage questioning, and the sharing of ideas and concerns. Support for individual pupils in difficulty, and families when necessary, is well organised and readily available in school or through the wide range of extended services in the locality. The new system for tracking pupils' academic progress is used effectively to set targets, and provide guidance to individuals on how to improve. This works well, especially for those who find learning difficult, but expectations are not yet consistently high enough for the most capable. Less effectively used, is the tracking information for year groups and groups of pupils, as it is not readily accessible. Pupils have a healthy sense of competition, know their targets well and are determined to succeed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed and has good capacity for further improvement. The outstanding leadership of the acting headteacher has enabled a brisk pace of change to take place over the last year, while maintaining good staff morale and upgrading systems and procedures. Parents are very supportive of the changes, especially identifying the increase in their children's enjoyment of school and the progress they are making. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Governance is good, with strong leadership shown during recent changes in senior staff. Improvement planning is clear, with appropriate priorities and is based on good, accurate self-evaluation and takes account of a wide range of views. Effective use has been made of the local authority's support to improve staff skills and advise on good practice. Community cohesion is good, within the school, the local environment and the faith community. The involvement in the local cluster of schools and extended services is well managed to guide families to the appropriate provision for their needs. The school's commitment to equality of opportunities is strong and clear to see in the efforts made to ensure all pupils have access to the full range of learning opportunities the school offers.

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 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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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 eliminated	1
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**

12 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Cumbria, CA26 3PX

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. You clearly enjoy being in school and have many friends. You showed me how well you are improving your work, and how carefully you look after each other. You told me you felt safe in school and how well all the staff look after you. I was pleased to see that you know how to keep safe and healthy, and that almost all of you have good attendance.

From visiting your lessons I could see how keen you are to learn, and how well you work with each other and with your teachers. Your behaviour is excellent and most of you are making good progress and improving your standards. Your teachers have helped you to see what you can do to make your work even better. Keep on asking for help if you need it. Your parents are very pleased with your progress.

Some of you have some catching up to do, especially if you are going to move on to your secondary school soon. I know you are working hard to do this by meeting your targets. You need a little extra help to make sure you make the best progress you can. So, I have asked your headteacher and governors to do the following things:

- Improve standards in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6, especially for pupils working towards Level 5.
- Check that everyone has work that is right for their age, and not too easy or too difficult.
- Improve the assessment system so that all the information the school needs on pupils' progress in each year group is easily available.

Best wishes for the future.

Jackie Barnes

Lead inspector