

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Exmouth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113431
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311266
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Smith
Headteacher	V K McCloskey
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2003
School address	Regents Gate Long Causeway Exmouth EX8 2JP
Telephone number	01395 264875
Fax number	01395 223251

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is average sized and serves the Roman Catholic community of Exmouth and surrounding area. Pupils start at the school with skills that are higher than expected. The school has above average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education. Parents are happy with the school and have very few concerns. They appreciate the qualities of the headteacher and the school's happy atmosphere.

Pupils' achievement has fluctuated since the last inspection, when standards at the school were very high. In 2007, standards in the Year 2 assessments fell, particularly those in writing, which were below average. Standards in Year 6 improved on those in 2006 and were above average and achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory.

The headteacher has not delegated responsibilities sufficiently to other leaders who, consequently, do not fully understand how to fulfil their roles. Governors have not monitored or influenced the school in the past but there are good indications that they are now becoming more involved in school life. The school does not always rigorously evaluate what it provides or act consistently to address weaknesses, such as those in assessment. The school has started collecting assessment information but does not always take action where this indicates areas of concern. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, encouraging satisfactory achievement, but some lessons are not challenging enough for all pupils. However, the Foundation Stage is well led and managed, promoting good achievement in the Reception Year.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are mature, considerate young people, who have a good sense of right and wrong, relate well to one another and behave well. They enjoy school life and praise the way teachers look after them. One Year 6 pupil emphasised that, 'Nobody ever gets left out'. Care and support for pupils are satisfactory. They feel safe in school and know who to turn to for help. The school offers too little guidance to pupils about the next steps to take in their learning. Marking of pupils' work is regular but does not always give pupils enough guidance on what they need to do to improve. The curriculum is satisfactory and offers good opportunities for learning in activities outside the classroom.

The school has made satisfactory improvements since the previous inspection and its capacity for improvement in the future is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle well into school and enjoy learning and playing. They make good progress in all areas because of good care, effective teaching and a broad range of carefully planned and managed activities. Teachers keep a careful record of how well children are progressing and adapt what they are doing to provide the right degree of challenge.

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce rigorous self-evaluation so that the school has good information to plan improvements and raise achievement.
- Use assessment effectively to track pupils' progress and raise achievement by providing lessons which are consistently challenging and by increasing pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve leadership and management to enable all staff and governors to fully fulfil their roles and responsibilities and contribute to school improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of under-performance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start school with better than expected skills for their age and leave Year 6 with above average standards. Pupils' achievement over their time at school, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. Pupils' standards have fluctuated since the previous inspection due to the school's inconsistencies in monitoring and improving achievement.

Well organised provision in the Reception class means that children make clear gains in their learning and enter Year 1 with better than expected standards. Standards fell in the Year 2 national assessments in 2007 to just above average in reading and mathematics, and were significantly below average in writing. Pupils' standards in the 2007 Year 6 national tests were higher than in 2006. Given these pupils' high starting points, based on their Year 2 test results, their progress was satisfactory. The proportion of pupils achieving higher grades in both Year 2 and Year 6 assessments varies and is often above average. However, in 2007, the proportion of Year 2 pupils attaining the higher level 3 in writing dipped significantly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are welcoming and polite and report that they feel valued by all adults in the school. This caring, supportive atmosphere enables them to grow in confidence and self-esteem. It has a positive impact, promoting pupils' enthusiasm to learn. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good both in lessons and while at play. This is because there are warm relationships and shared expectations, which most pupils closely identify with. They come to school happily and their attendance is above average. All adults working in the school are good role models. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and take part in the lively exercise programme 'LEAP into Life' each day. Pupils say bullying is rare and quickly dealt with. Parents confirm their children enjoy school and are confident that they are safe. Pupils value the school council as a lively forum where their ideas are heard and acted upon. They actively raise money for deprived children and demonstrate good involvement in the local and wider community. They have satisfactory opportunities to develop the skills which will help them become economically successful.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons are often engaging and pupils respond well. They enjoy lessons and their behaviour is invariably good or better. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate with one another in their learning. As a result, relationships in the classroom are constructive and this helps to ensure that learning is satisfactory. Classrooms are well managed and lessons are enlivened by the use of interesting resources. In particular, teachers use interactive whiteboards well to illustrate lessons. At its best, teaching is well informed, confident and precise, promoting effective achievement.

However, teachers do not use assessment information well enough. This was a significant concern when the school was last inspected. Assessment is not always used effectively to plan lessons which provide good levels of challenge to all pupils and to enable them to make good progress. The school offers satisfactory support for those experiencing learning difficulties, ensuring that these pupils make similar progress to their peers. However, teaching assistants receive little direction from teachers and so do not help all pupils who may need support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school offers a wide range of interesting activities outside the classroom, particularly in sport. These draw on good links with the local secondary college. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the opportunities available and take part in large numbers.

There is satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum and the school offers French lessons in Years 3 to 6. There is a strong focus on personal, social and health education and religious education and this has a positive impact on pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils say they feel safe and know who to turn to for support. The commitment of the headteacher and staff ensures good pastoral care and support for all pupils. The school ensures that all staff are properly checked and appropriately qualified. Procedures for child protection, safeguarding and health and safety are satisfactory.

However, the school has not used developed academic guidance and support for pupils sufficiently, to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they could. Targets are not used well enough to promote better achievement. Pupils work hard but are too often in the dark about their standards and what they should do to improve on them. Teachers' marking often includes encouraging comments but provides little feedback to pupils about the standard of their work or specific guidance on how to improve it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The way the school is led and managed has not always ensured consistently good achievement by pupils. The headteacher and governing body have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, but the system to identify where improvements should be made and determine what needs to be done is inconsistent. The school's development plan clearly identifies areas for improvement and gives an overview of what actions to take and some of these have been implemented. However, weaknesses in monitoring have meant that the school's evaluation of their success is not always accurate. The school's self-evaluation processes tend to lack rigour and the school does not always make the best possible use of information about pupils' performance.

Governors have not monitored and evaluated the school's work effectively in the past, so have not hold been able to hold the school to account. However, recent changes to the governing body have seen an increased determination to find out more about the school's performance and to act as a critical friend to the school.

Senior leaders and middle managers have a limited idea of their roles and responsibilities and are not encouraged to be sufficiently proactive in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. This leaves much of the responsibility for leadership and management with the headteacher, who sometimes has too much to do. Resources are satisfactorily deployed, except for teaching assistants who are not well directed.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	4
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

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Exmouth, EX8 2JP

Thank you very much for the nice welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We thought that you were very polite and mature and we enjoyed talking to you.

You told us that you like school and how well you get on with one another. The inspectors agree with you that teachers care for your welfare and your personal development is good. The standards of your work are high and you make satisfactory progress.

The way you are taught is satisfactory and you work hard to learn as well as you can. The mixture of subjects you follow is satisfactory and we know you like the variety of clubs and activities after school.

- Your school provides a satisfactory education, but there are a number of things that need improvement, these are:
- The school needs to check up on how well it is doing more often and more thoroughly so that it can plan improvements.
- The school should use the results of the tests you do to check on your progress, always give you work at the right level and to tell you more clearly how your work could be better.
- Your teachers and governors need to know what they should each do to help improve the school.

You can help too, for example by asking your teachers what you need to do to improve your work.

Once again, many thanks for your help and good luck in the future.

Best wishes

John Carnaghan Lead inspector

18 October 2007

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Best wishes

John Carnaghan
Lead inspector