

St Joseph's Catholic Combined School, Poole

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113831
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	311391
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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	4–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	351
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Gregory
Headteacher	Marita Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Sancreed Road Parkstone Poole BH12 4DZ
Telephone number	01202 741932
Fax number	01202 710593

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a large combined school which is oversubscribed. It provides before- and after-school care and offers an exceptional number of extra-curricular activities. The after-school care was not inspected. Attainment on entry is below the level usually found. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around average. A few of the small number of pupils from non-British backgrounds speak English as an additional language. The school holds a considerable number of awards, including for Healthy Schools, Investors in People and the Inclusion quality Mark.

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 with significant strengths in important aspects of its work. The key to its success is the exceptional direction provided by the headteacher and her deputy and the excellent support she is given by the senior leadership team and governors. Governors' contribution to monitoring and development work is outstanding.

In the past, development has been hampered by the long-term absence of senior staff, which affected the quality of subject leadership and the work of the senior leadership team. The school was without a substantive deputy headteacher for a considerable time. In the last two years, the new deputy headteacher and a reconstituted senior leadership team have very effectively supported the headteacher in moving the school forward and improvement has been rapid. For example, standards in science, which were below average two years ago, are now above average. The school has done well in raising the number of pupils reaching the expected and higher levels in national tests and improving boys' performance. Self-evaluation is accurate. The school is aware that some areas still need to be addressed and is successfully doing so. The full effect of current development strategies has yet to be seen, but the school's past track record gives confidence that it is well placed to improve further.

The school's vision of providing a well-rounded education is realised in the excellent curriculum and the outstanding level of care and support. As one parent wrote, 'St Joseph's is a wonderful school where my daughter has felt secure and nurtured. Any issue I have had has been dealt with brilliantly and immediately.' The curriculum has improved greatly, most notably in music and information and communication technology (ICT), and provides an exceptional range of activities. Outstanding partnerships with other schools and agencies enhance both the curriculum and the level of care and support. The school has justly received an award for the range and quality of its extra-curricular activities. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. This is an exceptionally caring school where the Catholic ethos is evident in all its work and pastoral support is excellent. The work of the breakfast club is very good. The support provided by the inclusion team for pupils with specific needs is outstanding and has been recognised in the award of the Inclusion Quality Mark. As a result of these strengths, pupils enjoy school very much. They say, 'The teachers are nice and make lessons fun.' Relationships are excellent, as is pupils' behaviour. They develop into thoughtful, polite and very responsible young people by the time they leave.

Underpinned by very good planning, teaching is mainly good and challenges pupils to do well. However, some lessons lack rigour, pace and excitement and do not capitalise enough on pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Marking of pupils' work is too variable in quality and some staff do not make enough use of pupils' improvement targets to encourage them to do better.

Pupils achieve well and standards are rising, although it is difficult to compare year groups because standards on entry are declining. By the time pupils leave in Year 7, standards are above those expected for their age, which represents good progress from their average starting point.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In this calm and supportive learning environment, children grow in confidence and make good progress, with the majority reaching the standards expected by Year 1. Progress in personal

and social development is very good. Children respond positively to the well-established routines and are very well behaved. The curriculum is good and provides an effective balance of activities led by adults and those that children choose for themselves, encouraging independent learning. However, the school is aware that, while it is awaiting new building work, outdoor activities are limited during rainy or cold weather. Teaching is good, especially in giving children the building blocks for developing reading and writing skills. Good account is taken of daily observations of children's progress to ensure that activities are thoughtfully planned to build on previous learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide greater consistency in teaching by ensuring that all lessons provide rigour and pace, and generate excitement in learning.
- Make better use of marking and pupils' targets to indicate how pupils can improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils develop a good range of skills to support their future economic well-being. High quality support for pupils with learning, language or social needs ensures they achieve as well as their classmates. Reception children's good progress results in the majority reaching the expected standards by Year 1, although few exceed them so overall standards are slightly below expectations.

Since the last inspection, progress in Years 1 to 6 has improved and is now good. Standards at the end of Year 2 remain around average because of declining standards on entry to Year 1. Year 6 standards have risen well and are currently around average, although above this in science. This represents good progress as standards for this group of pupils were below average in Year 2. Year 7 pupils make good progress to reach standards above those expected for their age. As a result of the exceptionally good provision, pupils make especially good progress in music and ICT, where standards are above those normally seen, exceptionally so in music.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

From the time they start in Reception, pupils make outstanding progress in this aspect. The caring, nurturing ethos of the school, based on respect and the recognition of individual needs, helps ensure relationships are excellent. The school is justly proud of pupils' outstanding behaviour. Pupils are very friendly, polite and helpful, willingly supporting classmates who find work difficult. They are excellent peer mediators, helping to resolve playtime disagreements.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding in all aspects. Many opportunities, such as the excellent use of music in assemblies encouraging pupils to reflect on the important things in life, have developed a sense of spirituality, evident in many activities. Pupils have an especially good awareness of different cultures and their responsibility to the wider world gained, for example, through links with a school in India. Their outstanding citizenship skills are evident in the exceptional part they play in school life, for example, when interviewing candidates for the role of deputy headteacher. Pupils' huge enjoyment of school results in their excellent behaviour in lessons and capacity for hard work. Attendance is well above the local authority average and in line with the national. Pupils are very aware of how to keep healthy and safe and say teachers help them to feel safe in school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Outstanding relationships and well-established routines are a strong feature of all lessons. Activities effectively match individual pupils' needs, although some lessons do not capitalise on pupils' great enthusiasm for learning as the pace is rather slow and tasks are uninspiring. Resources, such as puppets, are used well to help pupils learn easily and there is a good focus on providing practical tasks which engage pupils and keep them fully involved. Classroom assistants support work well, especially for pupils who have specific needs. Teachers' effective questioning probes pupils' understanding, makes them think harder and inspires them to do better. However, some teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to work towards their improvement targets and, when marking their work, do not indicate how they could improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's vision of providing a curriculum that develops well-rounded pupils and addresses their individual needs is fully realised. Its breadth and richness is outstanding. Clear progression in planning, together with exceptionally well-designed links between different subjects, are major factors in helping to raise standards. Programmes of work for slow learners are especially good and the increasingly effective provision for more-able pupils is raising the number reaching the higher levels in national tests. Links with other schools help support these aspects especially well. The excellent personal, social and health education programme is a major factor in pupils' outstanding personal development. High quality programmes of work in subjects like music and ICT, together with opportunities to learn French and an excellent range of after school activities, enhance pupils' progress and enjoyment of school exceptionally well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding systems are in place to ensure pupils' health and safety, with all staff involved in rigorous risk assessment and the school council regularly consulted. Child protection and staff vetting procedures fully comply with regulations. Excellent pastoral support helps pupils to make exceptionally good progress in their personal development. The support for pupils with learning, language or social needs is especially good and they are very well included in all the school has to offer. There are excellent procedures for tracking pupils' progress which allow the school to intervene effectively when this slows or to boost the progress of the more able. Pupils are increasingly involved in checking on how well they are doing. They are set challenging improvement targets in English and mathematics which help inspire them to make good progress, although some staff could make better use of these in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The vision and leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leadership team is outstanding. It is the driving force behind the school's determination to provide a broad and well-rounded education and high quality care for pupils. To assist its work, the school has

forged a considerable number of partnerships with other schools and agencies, which brings great benefits to pupils' education and welfare. There are comprehensive and high quality systems for monitoring the school's work and pupils' progress, which allows weaker areas to be pinpointed and successfully addressed. The school is well aware of where improvement is still needed and is continuing to raise boys' achievement and the number of pupils reaching the higher levels in national tests. Development planning is very effective, with the school setting itself challenging targets for improvement. However, the full effect of its current development work, for example, in involving pupils more in checking on their own progress, is yet to be seen. Subject leadership is very good. Leaders are exceptionally well involved in monitoring their area of responsibility and planning for improvement. The work of the governing body is outstanding. Governors have a particularly good understanding of how well the school is doing and their challenge and support for improvement is excellent.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well 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	1
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
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	1
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

17 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Combined School, Poole, Dorset BH12 4DZ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly, polite and helpful. I particularly want to thank the school council, who gave up their lunchtime to speak with us. We found your school to be good and are delighted that you and your parents think so too.

- Here are some of the things we found out were especially good about the school:
- Your personal development is outstanding. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and how well you get on with each other. You are very kind and helpful to other pupils and do a lot to help your school and other people too.
- You make good progress and, by Year 7, standards are above those expected for pupils of this age.
- Staff take especially good care of you and give you lots of good advice on how to improve.
- You have very many interesting activities in lots of different subjects and the school provides an excellent number of clubs.
- Staff work exceptionally well with other schools and agencies to make sure you have lots of opportunities and support.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are working very well together to help your school get even better.

- Here are some of the things we would like to see improved:
- Try to make all learning as exciting as we saw in some lessons and make sure that you do not spend too long on any activities.
- Help you to check your improvement targets regularly and, when marking your work, show you how you can improve. You can help by always thinking about how you can do better.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson Lead Inspector

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D Wilkinson
Lead Inspector