

Worcester, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116925
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312447
Inspection date	10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Hartforn
Headteacher	Marian Jay
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2005
School address	Chedworth Drive Warndon Worcester WR4 9PG
Telephone number	01905 452772
Fax number	01905 452772

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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 pupils' achievements, their personal development, well-being, and the quality of teaching and learning. He gathered evidence from discussions with leaders, managers, pupils, staff and parents; visits to all classes; observation of other aspects of the school day such as break and lunch times; and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is situated in an area of mixed housing on the edge of the city. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals has increased significantly in recent years and is now broadly average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

A question one often asks is, 'Would I be happy if my child or grandchild were at this school?' and the answer in this case is a resounding, 'Yes!' as this is a good school with some outstanding features. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, saying such things as, 'The school recognises everyone's worth and embraces individuality, teaching is excellent and I would recommend this school to anyone.'

So, why is this a good school? Their motto, which is, 'Following Jesus in all we do' is very much at the heart of the school and in particular of the very high levels of pastoral care. Staff know the pupils and their personal needs and circumstances extremely well and go out of their way to ensure all are safe and happy. Pupils confirm the effectiveness of this care, saying that they feel very secure and that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. Parents also appreciate the care taken of their children, saying for example, 'Everyone is very caring and helpful and always ready to listen to any problem from a parent or pupil.'

The high levels of care result in pupils' outstanding personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave exceptionally well and play safely with good regard for others. They live healthily and contribute extremely positively. They thoroughly enjoy taking on jobs around the school, carrying them out very responsibly; for example the Joeys, who care for younger children at break times, are extremely popular with their charges. The comment made by a parent that the school is like one big family is very apt. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. As a parent typically commented, 'My child comes out of school with a smile and looks forward to the next school day.'

Pupils' enjoyment is not restricted to break and lunch times. A parent put it very well, 'Teaching staff work hard to make lessons interesting and enjoyable.' This shows in pupils working hard and wanting to succeed. Teachers make particularly good use of technology to help pupils learn. The pods of six computers in each classroom ensure that information and communication technology is used well to support learning in many lessons. Teachers also use their interactive whiteboards well to enthuse and engage pupils. Teaching assistants play a strong role in lessons, particularly in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to ensure they progress at similar rates to their classmates.

The school has put in place very thorough systems to check on the progress that pupils are making. These are used well to ensure that any that are likely to fall behind are quickly identified. Good strategies are then used to help them. Pupils have targets to help them improve their work in reading, writing and mathematics. Although these are good, they are not consistent. In writing, the targets are very precise and short-term, but they are not written in language that pupils can readily understand. Those for mathematics are very easy for pupils to understand but the targets are rather more general and long-term.

Children enter school with levels of skills and knowledge below those expected in key areas of their communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. They make good progress through the school although this progress is better in Reception and Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. Children make good progress in Reception as provision is good. By the time they leave from Year 6, pupils have reached above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Although boys do not do as well as girls, they tend to have lower starting points and all make similar progress relative to their abilities.

A couple of years ago, the school recognised that standards in mathematics were not as good as those in other subjects. Very detailed analysis was carried out, in conjunction with other local schools, and strategies were put in place which have resulted in standards by the end of Year 6 being as good in mathematics as in other subjects. However, these strategies have not had so much impact in Years 1 and 2 and standards in mathematics in these classes are weaker than those in reading and writing, mainly because pupils are not mastering basic calculation skills fast enough.

The links that have been established with other schools and organisations are of immense benefit to pupils' learning. As well as the work on mathematics, the network of local Catholic primary schools has worked together very effectively to raise standards in a variety of other subjects. The school also has strong links with the college to which most pupils transfer and the on-site day nursery and playgroup. These ensure confident transfers and continuous learning as well as benefiting more able pupils who attend the college for special lessons.

The foundation that supports the success of the school is effective leadership. The headteacher, very ably supported by the senior leadership team, has a clear vision for the school. Their drive has been communicated well to staff and governors, who share the vision and work together well to evaluate the effectiveness of the school and make continuous improvements. An unusual, and very effective, aspect of the running of the school is the involvement of parents and pupils. Parents are canvassed for their opinions regularly and their views taken on board. However, pupils are even more involved, and all are helping to monitor the progress towards targets in the school development plan. Members of the school council attend one of the governors' committees and their input is valued and acted on. With the progress that the school is making and the evident drive to continue to raise standards, the school is well placed to continue on its upward path.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start in Reception with levels of skills and knowledge just below those expected. However, their skills in key areas of language and mathematical development are significantly below expectations. They make good progress and reach expected levels in most areas of learning by the time they start in Year 1. This progress is particularly good in their literacy and numeracy skills but not so good in creative development. There is a good balance between activities led by the teacher and tasks that children can choose themselves and children therefore learn to be independent and responsible. The independent tasks are chosen well to support their current learning and this is an important factor in the progress that they make. The well-equipped outside area is used well to broaden the range of experiences in all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 by ensuring that pupils master the basic skills of calculation more quickly.
- Adapt the targets being set for pupils to help them improve their work so that they are consistent between subjects.

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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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	2
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	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 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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Worcester, WR4 9PG

Thank you so much for welcoming me when I visited your school. I think you are all extremely polite and well behaved. I very much enjoyed listening to you tell me how much you enjoy school and I could not find any of you who wanted to change anything. I am not surprised that you enjoy school so much as you are fortunate to be attending a good school that has some outstanding things. As one of you said to me, 'This is a fun place to be.'

I think that these are the best things about your school:

- You are developing really well into sensible and responsible young people. I was particularly impressed with the way so many of you help to look after younger children and play your part in the running of the school through the school council and in other ways.
- All adults look after you extremely well and you told me that you feel safe and that any problems you have are sorted out quickly.
- You make good progress because your teachers make your lessons interesting and they teach you well.
- Your teachers keep a really good track of how well you are doing so that they can make sure that none of you are falling behind.
- Your headteacher and staff know exactly what to do to make your school even better.

I have suggested that the following things might be improved:

- Those of you in Years 1 and 2 do not learn your number skills quickly enough.
- Your targets in writing are not always easy for you to understand and your targets in mathematics are not always easy for you to achieve very quickly.

I know you will continue to work hard and do everything you can to help your headteacher and teachers make your school even better.

Yours faithfully

John D Eadie Lead inspector

Annex B

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John D Eadie
Lead inspector