

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hurst Green

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119641
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313369
Inspection date	7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Adrian Howell
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2004
School address	Whalley Road Hurst Green Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 9QJ
Telephone number	01254 826246
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- whether the quality of teaching, the breadth of the curriculum and the impact of leadership and management were strong enough to justify the school's judgement of outstanding effectiveness
- whether the curriculum was planned well enough to enable the advanced skills of the large majority of pupils to be extended in a variety of new and challenging situations in all subjects
- whether the school's links with the wider community were strong enough to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world, including the richness and diversity of modern society.

Evidence was gathered from the school's performance data and other school documentation, observations of teaching and learning, the work produced by pupils (including how pupils interact with each other and their response to what is provided for them), parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils and staff and one governor. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. The inspector found that almost all of the judgements made in the school's self-evaluation form were justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a very small school which educates all of its pupils in two mixed aged classes. There is a part-time nursery which educates up to eight pupils for three afternoons a week. All are of White British origin and the proportion taking free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but an above average percentage has a statement of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Although it is very small, it has a big heart. It welcomes pupils from all backgrounds but promotes strong Catholic values. Pupils acquire a love of learning, excellent levels of personal development and outstanding levels of academic achievement. The school is a much valued part of the local community with which it has close links that are mutually beneficial. Parents' positive views of the school's work are ratified by the findings of the inspection. A comment typical of many parents is that the school, '...is working with us, his parents, to produce a well-rounded, happy, confident individual.'

Pupils benefit from outstanding levels of support and guidance from a dedicated and talented team of staff. All necessary steps to maintain safety and pupils' safeguarding are in place. A strong family ethos pervades the school and even a visitor quickly feels part of a community which values each person within it, including teachers, all staff, pupils, governors and parents. At all times pupils are well behaved and show care for others. The mixed aged classes and the excellent levels of integration of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities result in mature pupils who understand the importance of putting others before themselves. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of the choices required to live safe and healthy lives. They are very much part of the school and willingly take responsibility for aspects of its day-to-day life. Pupils enthusiastically help by tidying books, organising the sports resources and helping to clear up during lunch; they are not shy in coming forward (politely!) with ideas for improving the school in their role as pupil councillors. Attendance is very good and is an important factor in the high standards achieved. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their future education.

The advanced levels of pupils' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have a very positive influence on academic achievement. The analysis of assessment and test results has to be treated with caution because of the very small numbers of pupils in each year group. Inspection findings, however, support the very positive picture in the school's performance data. Pupils' progress never stands still. They make good progress in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2 it is exceptional. Standards are outstanding in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. In 2007, the Year 6 results were very high, being well above the national average. Compared to similar schools nationally, achievement was exceptional and ranked the school in the top one percent. This has been the case, year in and year out. Pupils also achieve high standards in sport and music.

The reason for the impressive standards is the quality of teaching. It is outstanding. Throughout the school teachers have high expectations of pupils. They have a good insight into pupils' needs and set work which extends their knowledge and understanding. Teaching is a team effort, with teaching assistants playing a vital part, in particular supporting pupils with additional needs. In Key Stage 1 teaching is very good. The wide spread of ages and abilities are very well met and pupils make good progress. In Key Stage 2 teaching is quite exceptional. Very good subject knowledge ensures that lessons are exciting and relevant which captures the pupils' interests. Lessons zip along and at no time is there ever any slack. Pupils work industriously and display great satisfaction when they achieve their targets. Great pride is evident in the pupils' high quality of written work. Computer technology is an everyday part of learning. Great expertise was employed by pupils using data-loggers to investigate which materials were the best thermal insulators. Even more skills were evident when pupils created their own accounts of their investigation on their computer. In doing so they drew on very well developed skills of

word processing and successfully imported digital photographs of their work and represented the data gathered by skilfully exploiting data handling programmes.

The curriculum is very good and ensures that the pupils are confident and do extremely well. Very close links with local schools enable pupils to participate in a wide range of sports and include some competitive events. Pupils are keen to attend the wide range of extra-curricular clubs. These include gymnastics, tag rugby, dance, drama and singing. Pupils are also encouraged to participate in interschool challenges other than sport; for example, in preparing entries to primary engineering events. This enrichment broadens pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world and is extended with regular residential visits for older pupils. The provision within the curriculum for developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of modern society is, however, not as strong as other areas and pupils' understanding of different cultures is not as developed as it could be.

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher knows exactly what a school of this nature needs and makes very good use of all resources. A very close team has been created. From the very effective school administrator, to the class teachers, to the support staff, to the pupils and parents – everyone is valued and has their part to play. Staff are constantly encouraged to develop their own professional skills so that pupils receive the best possible academic and personal guidance. Sensible structures exist which enable the school to make accurate evaluations of its strengths and areas for development. This information informs sharp targets for improvement in the school's development plan. Governance is good. Governors are supportive and visit the school often, but more could be done to assist in the school's self-evaluation process. The school is better than it was at the time of the last inspection and has an excellent capacity to improve further in future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good. Children start Reception with skills that are typical for their age and leave with standards that are above expectations. Children benefit from being with Key Stage 1 pupils. It contributes to the children's very good levels of personal, social and emotional development and good standards in all areas of learning. Exciting and stimulating activities are carefully planned to meet the specific needs of children in the Foundation Stage. The provision for children in the Nursery successfully meets their needs, but children do not have enough opportunities to benefit from learning alongside children in Reception.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the curriculum so that pupils develop a good understanding of the richness and diversity of modern society.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

8 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hurst Green, BB7 9QJ

My day with you was very enjoyable and it gave me a good insight into all the things you do. You are fortunate to attend an outstanding school. This doesn't mean that it is perfect but it is doing an excellent job.

You are a vital part of the school and your excellent behaviour and very high levels of courtesy and care for others are impressive. I was amazed by how hard you work in lessons and was really pleased to hear that you like the 'pressure' to achieve well. Your use of computers in Key Stage 2 and your ability to learn on your own are amongst the best I have ever seen.

Your teachers are very caring and make sure that you all feel safe. Many of you are very able. Teachers know this and are exceptionally skilled at giving you work that is interesting and makes you think. This is one reason why your standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are extremely high. The hard work I saw going on in lessons and the neatly presented and high quality of work in your books show how much you enjoy school and take pride in what you do.

Your curriculum really inspires you to learn. The trips and after school clubs are some of reasons why you enjoy school. More, though, needs to be done to develop your knowledge and understanding of the lives and cultures of others in modern society. The school will be finding ways of doing this.

You are lucky to be part of such a happy family. Your school is exceptionally well led and managed and everyone works closely as a team. Please thank your parents for sending their questionnaires to me. They showed that virtually all of them like the school as much as you do.

I wish you all the very best. The school has prepared you very well for your future lives.

Dave Byrne

Lead inspector