

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Stacksteads, Bacup

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119661
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313379
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Penny Parrish

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	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Oliver Finnegan
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	Huttock End Lane Stacksteads Bacup Lancashire OL13 8LD
Telephone number	01706 873177
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a small Catholic primary school which serves an urban area with social and economic deprivation. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Children start school in the Reception year with skills that are generally below that which is typical for their age, particularly in speaking and listening. The mobility of pupils is high; almost half the pupils in school did not begin their education in the Reception year. The school has experienced staff changes since its last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with strengths in its care for pupils and their personal development. Parents are very pleased with the school's work, with one summarising the views of many saying, 'St Joseph's is a warm, caring school - you can feel the presence of caring for the children when you walk into the school.'

Pupils make satisfactory progress, overall, and good progress in the Foundation Stage. The small cohorts in the school mean that national test results can vary year-by-year and need to be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, standards are broadly average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, reflecting satisfactory achievement. Within this picture, the pupils' achievement in writing is weaker. A programme for improving writing has been introduced, but further time is needed for this action to impact fully on standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Parents acknowledge the school's successful efforts to help their children settle well. One speaks with affection of, 'a school that works with parents in all situations'. Relationships are very good. Pupils work hard and want to achieve well. Behaviour is also good and pupils readily agree that they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and know that the well attended, enjoyable sporting activities arranged each week provide good opportunities for exercise. Teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall, and improving now that there is greater stability in the staff team. In the best lessons, work is closely tailored to pupils' individual needs. However, pupils are not always clear what they should be aiming for and what they must do to improve. The satisfactory curriculum is enriched with the addition of French, for example, and special project weeks.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher provides an unwavering commitment to providing well for each and every pupil, but the school's development has been hampered by a number of difficulties, including some instability in staffing and the lack of a permanent senior management team. Nonetheless, the headteacher and chair of governors have succeeded in preserving a good family ethos in the school that nurtures pupils' personal development and well-being well. The school's evaluation of its own performance is largely accurate and it has set the right priorities for further development. However, subject leaders are not yet playing a full part in identifying priorities and plans for improvement. Recent building works have added significantly to the facilities and plans, already in hand, are likely to add further benefits to pupils through improvements to the grounds and outdoor facilities. The school provides sound value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start and achieve well in the Foundation Stage (the Reception year). They make good progress because of the effective teaching. By the time they transfer to Year 1, the children have made significant strides in their learning. Most children meet the expectations typical for their age, except in communication, language and literacy which is a little below. Although the children also work with pupils in Year 1, a skilful partnership between the teacher and teaching assistants makes sure their differing needs are generally met well. At the time of the inspection, the staff and children were enjoying the new facilities made available

after recent building improvements. Most children transfer very smoothly from a local nursery class and good liaison promotes effective continuity.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing.
- Ensure that pupils understand what they should be aiming for in their learning and how they can improve.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders in order to play a more significant part in promoting higher standards and set clearly planned priorities for improvement.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children start school with knowledge and skills generally below that which is normally expected for their age and by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, standards are broadly average. Writing is the weakest aspect of the pupils' attainment and although the school has already taken action to remedy this, it is too soon to judge how effective this is. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage, but this is not sustained throughout the rest of the school where progress is satisfactory. The results of the 2007 assessments and national tests indicate that progress is improving.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in the school, reflecting the effectiveness of the targets set for them and the extra help they receive. Those joining the school at other than the usual time make satisfactory progress generally, except for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who progress well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. From the earliest stages in the school, good behaviour and relationships establish a friendly atmosphere for learning. Pupils concentrate well and enjoy their work. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and well supported by the school's commitment to the Catholic faith. Pupils successfully learn about different cultures through the curriculum, school assemblies and special celebrations. They understand well the benefits of a healthy diet and exercising frequently. They readily agree that they feel safe in school; they say that misbehaviour is rare and if it does occur, the school deals with it effectively. Pupils are willing to take responsibilities. They help with many aspects of school organisation on a day-to-day basis and support others, for example, through the school's 'play leader' system and by raising funds for a range of charities. The pupils' committee provides good opportunities for democratic decision making. Their growing personal skills, including those in literacy and numeracy, and their maturity provide a sound basis for their future well-being. Attendance is broadly average; the majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. Pupils are managed well, are happy and generally enjoy their work, especially when teaching is enthusiastic and challenging. Teaching and learning are consistently good in the Foundation Stage because staff have a good understanding of the children's pastoral and academic needs and plan learning experiences accordingly. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the marking of pupils' work often congratulates them on their efforts, but does not always point out clearly enough what they should be aiming for and where they need to improve. Teaching assistants form a close team with class teachers and support learning well, especially for the children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of the pupils, and contributes well to their personal development. Schemes for teaching subjects, such as science and information and communication technology (ICT), have been strengthened recently so that new and temporary staff can quickly pick up what the pupils need to be taught. In this small school, staff work extra hard to provide a suitable range of sporting and other enrichment activities, which are well attended and popular with pupils. Good links with a local high school give pupils in Years 2 to 6 the opportunity to learn French and a specialist teacher provides tuition in music. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are used satisfactorily across other subjects. Staff changes mean that more training is needed on the use of the electronic whiteboards available as a means of extending the curriculum within lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Whilst the pastoral care is very effective, academic guidance and support is not yet ensuring that all pupils make good progress. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements fully. The school works well in partnership with parents and other agencies to support pupils, especially those who need extra help. Many parents speak warmly of the help they have received from the headteacher and staff in supporting their children's development, both at school and at home. There is a good team spirit amongst the staff; the family atmosphere in school means that staff know their pupils well. However, pupils do not always understand clearly enough the strengths and weaknesses in their learning. Consequently, some pupils are not sure what they need to do to improve their own work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a strong lead, but instability in staffing has meant that some aspects of the school's management have been difficult to promote in recent years. The key task of day-to-day management and care for pupils is achieved well. One parent described the school as 'run like a finely tuned engine'. The

governing body ensures that all statutory duties are met and the chair of governors has provided invaluable support for the headteacher and the school during times of difficulty, keeping the needs of the pupils at the forefront of the management of the school.

Staff changes and absences have had an effect, however, on the school's development of the quality of teaching and learning. Within this context, management responsibilities for individual subjects have been difficult to establish and develop, and made more difficult because there are few staff. The development of assessment systems has slowed, for example, since the last inspection. Greater stability in the school and more time away from teaching by the headteacher mean that the school is now beginning to move forward. There is more to be done, however, to establish a permanent management structure that enables continuous improvement in pupils' standards and progress, and plans are in hand to resolve this issue. The school's development plan focuses accurately on the right aspects for improvement, but action plans and predicted outcomes for pupils are not always clearly stated. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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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	3
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	2

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	3
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	3
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	3
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

5 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Lancashire, OL13 8LD

I enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for your warm welcome and for all your help in telling me about your school and your work, and for being so patient while I wrote down all that you told me. You are very well behaved and friendly, and this helped me to enjoy my stay very much. I think it also helps other children to feel safe and happy in your school.

Since the last time inspectors came, four years ago, your school has been through some ups and downs and you have had to be very sensible and kind with a lot of new teachers. It is fortunate that your headteacher has worked so hard to keep things going well for you through all these changes. The future of your school now looks more settled and there are going to be some more improvements. The governors and staff know what should be better and I am sure they can do what is needed.

These are the things your school needs to do better.

- Improve your writing. You will have to play your part by working extra hard on this.
- Help you understand more clearly what you need to learn and how you might improve. You will need to pay good attention to your teachers and try to follow their guidance.
- Make sure that teachers who are subject leaders have the opportunities to make work in every subject as good as it can possibly be.

I'm sure you will help with more ideas about how to improve your school.

With my very best wishes to you for your future success and happiness

Mrs Penny Parrish

Lead inspector