

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wrightington

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119696
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313396
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Yvonne Clare

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	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Phillips
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Keating
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	Mossy Lea Road Wrightington Wigan Lancashire WN6 9RE
Telephone number	01257 423092
Fax number	01257 423357

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a much smaller than average Roman Catholic primary school. All the pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils are entitled to a free school meal. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including pupils with a statement of special educational need, is low. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark 2, National Healthy School Status, the Quality Mark for personal, social, health and citizenship education and the Healthy Eating award in the Lancashire Healthy Schools Programme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, providing good value for money. The school is valued highly by parents; one parent summing up the feelings of many by writing, 'St Joseph's is a fantastic school with a warm, friendly atmosphere.' They comment on the care and concern shown by the school and how pleased their children are to be a part of the 'family of St Joseph's'. It is a happy and welcoming community.

The environment is safe, with bright displays on the walls throughout the building. Pupils enjoy their time at the school, their above average attendance paying testament to this. They take on positions of responsibility around school with enthusiasm and the work of the school council contributes well to the school's development. Pupils are open and friendly and they are not afraid to share their feelings, ensuring that pupils feel safe and know who to talk to if they face difficulties. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils are well aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and willingly take part in a range of physical activities. They have excellent interpersonal skills. These, together with secure learning in literacy and numeracy, prepare them well for future learning.

The support, care and teamwork apparent among the staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have a positive influence on pupils' attitudes and promote the good behaviour seen throughout the inspection. At breaks and lunchtimes pupils play happily together, enjoying the range of equipment available to them. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare but they are secure in the knowledge that they can seek help if necessary.

Children's skills and capabilities on entry to Reception are broadly typical for their age. However, the full range of skills is evident. They make good progress and pupils achieve well throughout the school. The school's results in the Year 6 2007 national tests were broadly in line with national figures, but results in mathematics and science showed fewer pupils than expected attaining the higher levels. School data and evidence in pupils' books show standards are now above average in both key stages and that pupils' achievement is good. Teaching assistants, supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do this well, ensuring these pupils are fully involved in activities and make good progress. Thorough tracking and assessment systems in place in the school enable pupils' progress to be monitored for any potential underachievement. Teaching is good across the school. Staff use a variety of activities to engage the pupils. There are few opportunities in lessons, however, where pupils are able to take decisions about their own learning in order to become more independent learners.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils well. There is a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities to support pupils' academic and personal development. The school's partnerships with other local schools through networks and links with external agencies are good and enhance the provision for pupils well.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher, ably assisted by her deputy, sets a clear direction for the development of a school where all pupils are expected to achieve well. They are ably supported by a hardworking and enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff, who share a strong vision; each plays an important role in improvement. There are effective systems for monitoring, which lead to accurate self-evaluation. However, subject leaders are not yet sharply focused on evaluating the impact of new initiatives on standards and achievement. Governors support the school well. The improvements made since the previous

inspection, the strengths in leadership and management and the effective systems of self-evaluation demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start school they display a wide range of skills, but the majority have skills that are broadly typical for children of their age in reading and mathematics, with some weakness in phonics. They make good progress in most areas of learning, particularly in their personal development, language and early mathematical skills, and are above expected levels on entry to Year 1. The Reception area is vibrant, exciting and stimulating and children enjoy their work and play, learn to take account of other children's needs and follow routines well. Staff ensure that children are safe and well cared for. Parents are fully involved and are kept well informed about their children's progress. The Foundation Stage leader manages the provision well and understands the effectiveness of the setting and how it can be improved. At the time of the inspection, opportunities for outdoor provision were very limited, due to building work in progress to enhance this area and provide more scope for creating an outdoor classroom.

What the school should do to improve further

- Challenge higher attaining pupils more effectively, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to make decisions in their own learning in order for them to become independent learners.
- Extend the monitoring role of subject leaders to enable them to evaluate the impact of improvement strategies on standards and achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Children build on the good foundations laid in Reception and consistently make good progress in Key stage 1 to reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. The small numbers of pupils in each cohort mean that standards can appear to fluctuate from year to year, but taken over time, the school has good evidence to show individual pupils make good progress by the end of Year 6. In the last 2 years pupils in Year 6 performed less well in mathematics and science than they did in English. The school has recognised this and taken prompt action to resolve it. Internal monitoring data and inspection evidence confirm that progress for the current pupils in Year 6 is good and that they are on course to meet their challenging targets in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils value their school. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They appreciate the friendships they make and the chance to 'make a difference', not only by their school responsibilities but also to the wider community through their fund raising. School councillors meet regularly and are proud of the changes they have instigated in school. Pupils are keen and enjoy their learning, particularly when they are actively involved. They have a good understanding of the importance of fitness and staying safe. Pupils comment on the fruit and toast on offer to them at morning break and the healthy lunches they enjoy. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils confirm that incidents related to bullying are rare and that 'everyone plays together really well'. 'Bubble

time' and 'chat time' offer opportunities for pupils to speak to a person of their choice if they are troubled. Good social skills, opportunities for responsibility and much improved provision in information and communication technology prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall. In most lessons there is substantial progress in learning, and teachers use a combination of clear learning objectives, challenging tasks, brisk pace and a good range of techniques to help make learning enjoyable. Planning takes account of prior learning, links assessment to future planning to meet the needs of different groups of pupils effectively and gives a clear, shared focus and success criteria, enabling pupils to know what is expected of them and how they can improve. Marking is constructive, with comments to enhance learning. The use of these skills is inconsistently applied in some lessons, resulting in learning that is sometimes no better than satisfactory. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pace of the lesson tends to be slow, mainly teacher-led, and pupils are not sufficiently challenged or involved. Good working relationships were seen in all classes. The teaching of various foundation subjects and science in some areas of the school tends to be over reliant on worksheets and pupils have too few opportunities to transfer their basic skills in other areas of the curriculum or to initiate their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. There is a good concentration on the core subjects of English and mathematics, with a particular focus on mathematics. In science, improved assessment procedures enable more accurate tracking of pupils' progress. Practical mathematics' lessons involving problem solving and more investigative work in science are enhancing pupils' learning well. Information and communication technology is also well provided for; all classrooms benefit from interactive whiteboards. Physical activity and links through the sports' partnership provide valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide variety of sports. Spanish and French clubs are run during lunch breaks and are open to all pupils throughout the school. There are themed days in art and dance and visiting groups perform for the pupils. The curriculum is planned effectively for the mixed-age classes to avoid repetition.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a good aspect of the school's work and pupils are well cared for. All the required child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place. Staff know their pupils well and are vigilant in looking after pupils' welfare. Parents comment that they are very comfortable leaving their children with the school, as they know they will be looked after very well with 'a staff that are sensitive to each child's individual needs'. Academic support and guidance are good and older pupils know what their targets are and what they need to do to improve. There are now good monitoring systems to check pupils' progress and these are used effectively to set challenging targets. Whilst some pupils are involved in assessing their own work and know how they can improve, this aspect of pupil involvement is not yet consistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Staff create a caring ethos and work enthusiastically to ensure that pupils are happy, do their best and have equal access to all activities. The headteacher provides strong leadership; she and the deputy headteacher present good role models for staff. Strong teamwork underpins the drive to secure improvement. Regular monitoring by subject leaders, in a variety of ways, ensures the school knows its strengths and where there is a need for improvement. This monitoring role needs to be extended to include the evaluation of new initiatives to check that there is a positive impact on pupils' standards. The school's self-evaluation is good and judgements are accurate. Governors are well informed, supportive and act as 'critical friends' to the staff. School development planning correctly identifies priorities for improvement and the school has worked hard and successfully to address issues from the previous inspection.

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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?	2
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?	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	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?	2

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

9 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wrightington, Lancashire, WN6 9RE

Thank you for making me so welcome in your bright and happy school and for your help during the recent inspection. I loved seeing all your beautiful displays and thought how exciting they made your school look.

I thought you were really well behaved, polite and treated each other well. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school. I think yours is a good school. All the staff work very hard to help you do your best and all of you work as a team.

You told me that you like school and enjoy your lessons as well as the clubs, visits and visitors. You are rightly very proud of your Healthy Schools award and the fish tank and play equipment that you have got through your school council. You amazed me with how much you know about staying safe and being healthy. You also care for each other very well and enjoy all the jobs and responsibilities your teachers ask you to do.

Your school knows just what to do to get even better. The staff will be helping you to do better in your numeracy and science by giving you things to do to really make you think hard. Your teachers will be letting you do more writing and research in your other lessons so it will make you think about what you are learning. They will also be checking carefully when new things are introduced to make sure that they are helping you to improve.

It was a pleasure to visit your school. Keep working hard so that you continue to do well!

Best wishes

Yvonne Clare

Lead Inspector