

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123847
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314739
Inspection date	26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

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	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Morton
Headteacher	Simon Kingwell
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Oxford Street Burnham-on-Sea TA8 1LG
Telephone number	01278 784641
Fax number	01278 794403

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • how well leaders and managers at all levels have identified priorities for improvement • how successfully the curriculum meets the academic and personal needs of the pupils • the impact of assessment arrangements on standards and the quality of learning. Evidence was gathered from analysis of school data, the school's self-evaluation, the previous inspection report, pupils' work, parent questionnaires, school policies, monitoring reports and other documents. Lessons were observed and discussions were held with pupils, senior staff, governors and teaching assistants. 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 the report.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is an average sized primary school. Most pupils come from a White British background, with a small number from other ethnic backgrounds. Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. Children start school in the Nursery class with skills and abilities that are generally in line with those expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils receive a very high quality education in this excellent school. Parents are unreserved in their praise for the school, which they describe as providing 'traditional values' and a 'family feel' with 'a strong emphasis on involving parents'. They recognise that 'the excellent opportunities for children' are down to the commitment of adults who are 'enthusiastic, professional and very focused on each child'.

The perceptive and highly committed headteacher is very well supported by a dedicated senior management team, staff and governing body. The leadership shied away from evaluating their overall performance as excellent as they consider that their work with children 'is never done'. School improvement planning is very tightly linked to routine monitoring that is carried out by the senior leaders and informed by regular inputs from the parents, pupils and outside agencies. Consequently, the school has made good progress in developing the curriculum, which is now excellent. Strong links between subjects ensure regular opportunities for pupils to use their considerable literacy skills and to challenge further their information and communication technology (ICT) and numeracy skills. There has been innovative work linking design and technology, art and music together for younger pupils when producing their own scripted puppet theatre. Leaders have made strong inroads to making the curriculum fit the needs of different ability groups. For example, they have planned additional opportunities for the more able and talented pupils in reading, writing, science and mathematics. The provision for those with speech and language and moderate learning difficulties is excellent and is ensuring that these pupils reach the highest standards they can. The curriculum is extremely well supported by numerous lunchtime and after school clubs, visits and residential experiences. These add to pupils' enjoyment of school life and help promote pupils' personal and social development and their high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Wonderful displays throughout the school show pupils that their work is valued.

The care, guidance and support for pupils and their personal development are both outstanding. Good links with outside agencies and excellent links with parents contribute to this. Pupils are very positive about the school, shown by their good attendance. They feel extremely safe and secure knowing that staff are always there to help them if they have any concerns. Older pupils take their share of responsibility for younger ones, helping sort out any minor problems at lunchtimes and in running lunchtime clubs. They have an extremely positive view about how to stay healthy and particularly enjoy the wide range of sports on offer, organised by the specialist physical education teacher. More than half of the pupils, of all ages, stay for after-school sport, music or art clubs. The school council takes its role seriously knowing that it helps make the school a better place. For example, it has harnessed pupils' enthusiasm for healthy activity through its work to extend the adventure playground, has gained funding for cycle paths around the school and encouraged an impressive commitment to walking to school. Pupils frequently add suggestions on how school meals can be healthier and most children now have a school dinner.

Pupils are also aware of the needs of the wider world and organise different fund raising activities. They have regular links with young people at a school in Kenya and a good understanding of what life is like for them. The pupils are respectful of adults and each other. Their behaviour is excellent, resulting in a harmonious school community and a very strong eagerness to learn that contributes to their outstanding achievement.

By the end of the Reception year, children are exceeding national expectations. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average. Progress through Years 1 to 6 is good and often outstanding. This is because well-focused action taken by the school matches work precisely where it will have most effect. Well-considered use is made of intervention material to boost pupils' learning and strengthen key skills. As a result, standards are well above average at the end of Year 6.

Excellent attention is paid to teaching reading and writing. This is evident in the attractive library and in books and on classroom walls. A strong emphasis is placed on speaking and listening skills through discussion, drama and role play. This has helped pupils to develop their ideas, language and vocabulary for writing, so improving further the content of their work. Teachers and senior leaders carry out regular and thorough analysis of achievement. Recently this had led to more attention on developing mental calculation strategies in mathematics. The impact of this was seen in the lesson where Year 2 pupils quickly saw the relationship between multiplication and division. The proportion gaining the highest levels year on year in mathematics and science is outstanding with English not far behind. Pupils currently in Year 6 are well on track to meet the demanding targets set for them. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties are higher than in previous years but they are making excellent progress. This is because of the well-focused and experienced support for the differing needs. Specialist teachers are deployed well to further raise standards in art, music and modern foreign languages, and improve staff expertise. Given pupils' very high level of basic skills and excellent personal development, they are extremely well prepared for their future life and learning.

The school monitors pupils' progress very carefully and sets very challenging end-of-year targets for teachers to plan towards and pupils to aim for. These are helping teachers look closely at the day-to-day progress pupils make to ensure that they select the right support and challenge appropriately. This contributes to the good whole-class teaching and learning. Lessons are well planned, prepared and managed. Pupils use computers to support their learning and pupils say they 'love the chance to work with friends on projects'. Teaching assistants work very well in their supporting role alongside teachers. There are some good opportunities for pupils to assess their work as they go along, although teachers miss opportunities to check on just what has been learnt during the lesson through asking challenging questions. Pupils throughout the school are set individual and class targets. The pupils enjoy having these clear markers to help them improve their work and they appreciate the constructive comments teachers make when they mark their work.

Leaders regularly check on teaching and learning. Lesson observations are focused on agreed areas of school improvement. Weaknesses in teaching are identified and support given, helping to continually improve the quality of learning. The school improvement plan sets out appropriate areas for improvement, based on thorough self-evaluation but is too cluttered with routine management issues to help governors work more smartly on areas for development. At present, it lacks clear rationale for why action is being undertaken and does not identify the role of the governing body in monitoring the success. However, given the impact of actions to raise achievement and the good improvements since the last inspection, combined with the systems to identify any underachievement, the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Nursery and the Reception class and by the time they start in Year 1, all are meeting expectations in all areas of their learning, with a significant minority

exceeding these expectations. Good emphasis is placed on providing children with activities that challenge their thinking and encourage them to develop communication skills. There is a very good balance of teacher-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. Excellent emphasis is given to developing social skills through role play and daily routines. Adults are rigorous in tracking the gains the children make in their learning and care is taken to give them the right adult support when they need it. Good work has started in matching more closely resources to meet the individual needs of children during outdoor activities and the highly perceptive Foundation Stage leader has clearly identified where this needs strengthening.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Improve teaching further by developing strategies for assessing how well pupils are learning during lessons.

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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	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	1

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?	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

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary and Nursery School, Burnham-on-Sea, TA8 1LG

Thank you for your help when I inspected your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and talking with some of you and in particular hearing about the things you are rightly proud of. You go to an outstanding school. I know you and your parents agree. Here are some of my other findings.

Those responsible for leading and running the school do a very good job and your headteacher is an excellent leader. You have a very rich curriculum with plenty of extras that your teachers make possible, including many clubs, visits and residential. I was pleased that all of you learn to play a musical instrument at some point during your time at school and have many exciting things to do, from learning to play samba to cricket. It is clear that you really enjoy going to school. Your attendance is better than most schools and you behave exceptionally well in class and at playtime. I know this is because you respect the adults who work with you. They in turn give you plenty of opportunity to have your say. The school council is very influential and I was impressed with the list of improvements it has brought about. Keep making the suggestions for how the school can be made even better.

You do extremely well at school and many of you reach very high standards, particularly in reading, writing, mathematics and science. You are fortunate to have such good teachers. All the adults take excellent care of you and they make every effort to help you make the best progress possible. Your teachers are very good at keeping a check on your progress and getting the right support for you. I think they could still do more during lessons to ask you harder questions to help them check out just how much you have learnt, so I have asked them to do this.

It was a pleasure to come to your school. You all are developing into responsible young people who have a good understanding of healthy eating, how to care for others and the environment. I know you will continue to work hard and help each other to do your best. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk Her Majesty's Inspector