

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124366
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314902
Inspection date	23 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Barbara Crane

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	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Wilks
Headteacher	Joyce Cassidy
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	Springfield Road Uttoxeter ST14 7JX
Telephone number	01889 562702
Fax number	01889 562702

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	23 June 2008
Inspection number	314902

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well teachers use information about pupils' progress; and how effectively leaders and managers are driving school improvement. Evidence was gathered from observations, discussions and the school's assessments of pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected 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 in this report.

Description of the school

This Catholic primary school is smaller than most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the number of pupils entitled to free school meals. The school has recently welcomed a number of Polish pupils who are learning English as an additional language. The headteacher was appointed just over a year ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Joseph's is a good school. Strong leadership and the effective teamwork of the staff and governors fill the school with optimism. The pupils' exemplary behaviour and good relationships help to make the school a harmonious community with a welcoming atmosphere. Parents are pleased with the quality of education provided. The view expressed by one parent that, 'This is a happy place, with a focus on family values such as caring and respect for others,' is typical of that held by many.

Pupils' achievement is good and they are well prepared for the future. Children start in the Reception class with skills that are broadly as expected for their age. Their good progress means that by the time they start in Year 1, standards are above average in all areas of learning. Pupils make good progress in subsequent years and reach standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. Standards in writing are not quite as high. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the support that they need to make good progress towards their targets. Pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language achieve as well as others because of timely and sensitive support.

Teaching is good and lessons are well planned and organised. Good relationships throughout the school support learning effectively. Pupils know that they are expected to work hard, listen carefully and make good progress. Teachers ask well-judged questions that keep pupils alert and probe their understanding. They use information and communication technology skilfully to enliven lessons and interest pupils. The slower progress made by some more able pupils has been dealt with effectively by boosting the level of challenge provided in teaching. Through its good analysis of pupils' progress the school has now rightly identified that pupils' progress in writing, throughout the school, is not as consistent as in other areas. Two factors contribute to this slightly slower progress. First, pupils are not always guided sufficiently clearly to understand exactly how to improve their writing. Second, opportunities are missed in teachers' planning for pupils to use and extend their skills in writing in other subjects.

Pupils enjoy learning and their attendance is better than in most schools. The good curriculum is planned so that they are interested in their lessons and persevere with tasks. Nevertheless, older pupils say that they would like to be able to find out more for themselves and have more control over the direction of their learning. The school acknowledges that it needs to build more excitement into the curriculum to harness pupils' initiative. Pupils make the most of the good range of clubs and extra activities offered, such as a gardening club and Spanish. Taster sessions for pupils in French and German arise from links with the high school. Pupils particularly enjoy the visits to places of interest, such as a recent trip to see an exhibition on Ancient Egypt, because they help to bring learning to life.

Good quality support and pastoral guidance by the staff result in pupils' good personal development and sense of well-being. Pupils feel safe and know that they can talk to adults if they are worried. Particularly vulnerable pupils receive support and guidance suitable to their need. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure. Good assessment and tracking systems have been introduced in the past year and are being well used by staff to gain a clear picture of pupils' progress and identify where to direct extra help. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of good health and fitness, reflected in the high attendance at physical activities. The range of sport on offer is greatly extended by the school's strong partnerships with other schools. Pupils follow the guidance provided on eating healthily and make

well-informed choices. Parents help by ensuring that lunchboxes are balanced and nutritious. Pupils make responsible choices over their actions and think deeply about how these will affect others. Pupils of all ages enjoy each other's company and learn the value of working for the good of all. Year 6 pupils say that 'You learn how to become responsible because people in this school trust you and so you become more mature.' Those trained as playground leaders and the school councillors, for example, play a good part in helping to make the school better for everyone. Pupils work enthusiastically to arrange events that raise funds for charities.

The headteacher's strong and principled leadership is acknowledged by the staff, parents and pupils as a revitalising force that is driving the school forward. Her clear vision for school improvement is well supported by the staff and governing body. Staff morale is high and people enjoy working together to get the best for the pupils. Other managers are steadily developing their skills in monitoring the school's provision. They are increasingly becoming involved in checking initiatives to see that things are working as they should be. Governors are well informed and play an active part in the school's life. They ask the right questions to challenge the school about its performance. The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate and well used to pinpoint the things that need to be worked on next. There is determined work towards the targets set for improvement which shows the school's good capacity to continue to move the school forward.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is well managed and planned so that children get a good start. The Reception children feel safe, secure and eager to learn because they are well cared for. Good teaching and the wide range of practical activities link areas of learning effectively. Children make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Their confidence and independence blossom because they are helped to overcome difficulties in a warm and supportive environment. Children's natural inquisitiveness is nurtured well, so they make good progress. There is a good balance of activities indoors and outdoors. The school is rightly aware that there is not always sufficient stimulation for children to write in different activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the guidance given to pupils about what they need to work on in their writing and provide more opportunities for them to write across the curriculum.
- Give the pupils more opportunities to influence what they will learn and how they will learn it.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
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

24 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Uttoxeter, ST14 7JX

Thank you all for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed spending the day with you. Now I am writing to tell you what I found out.

You go to a good school that prepares you well for the next stage of your education. Reception children get a good start. Those of you in Years 1 to 6 also do well in your work because of good teaching and so you reach well above average standards in your work by the time you leave the school.

I can see why the staff enjoy working at your school. Well done to everyone for making it such a friendly and happy place. Your behaviour is brilliant and you care for each other and get on together so well. You know how to keep yourselves and others safe. It was good to see that you know exactly what you need to do to keep healthy. You enjoy taking lots of exercise and eating the right food – keep it up! You are growing up as mature and sensible young people who love to help out and take on responsibilities. The school council and playground leaders do a grand job in helping the school to improve.

The staff look after you well. They want the best for you. You have a good curriculum and it is great that so many of you take part in the extra activities, particularly sport. Everyone is working hard to make your school improve. I have asked the people in charge and your teachers to do these things:

- Help you to know what to do next to improve your writing and give you more chances to write in different lessons.
- Let you use your own ideas more in lessons so that you decide how to go about finding things out and organising your work.

I know that you will enjoy these things because you like doing your best. Your parents and teachers are right to be proud of you. You are a credit to them. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Crane Lead inspector