

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125719
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315296
Inspection date	13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Malone
Headteacher	Jim Goggin
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Rowley Road Whitnash Leamington Spa CV31 2LJ
Telephone number	01926 427552
Fax number	01926 427552

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Introduction

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

The effectiveness of measures taken by the school's leadership to raise standards in writing.

The effectiveness of the provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

The quality of the curriculum.

The inspector gathered evidence from observations of lessons, discussions with pupils, governors and staff, tracking pupils' progress, analysis of attendance and gaining the views of parents. 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 this report.

Description of the school

This average sized school admits pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, but few are at an early stage of learning English. Relatively few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little higher than in most schools. There is a before and after-school club run by the school. Children's attainment on entry is typical 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

This outstanding school gets the very best out of pupils who are justifiably proud of their consistently high attainment. Year 6 pupils' standards are high in English, mathematics and science, which represents exceptional progress from their starting points and continues the good improvements over recent years. The highlights are in pupils' scientific and mathematical investigations and their love of reading. Pupils also achieve well in art and design, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). Over recent years, while standards in writing have been above average, they have not kept pace with improvements in reading. Action taken by the school to improve the teaching and curriculum is closing the gap, but some pupils still struggle when asked to write independently of the teacher. A key factor in pupils' outstanding achievement and the school's success lies in the excellent leadership by the headteacher. He inspires pupils and staff by his commitment to high academic standards while taking every opportunity to enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development. Other leaders share his vision and enthusiasm and they make a very effective team. The leaders analyse pupils' performance in detail, and use the information very well to set the school's priorities. An example of the effectiveness of this process is in science, where the leaders saw underachievement by more able pupils. They therefore made improvements in the way science was taught, and now the achievements of more able pupils, particularly when designing their own experiments, are outstanding. The leaders have developed strong partnerships with other schools that provide valuable opportunities for joint staff training and the sharing of expertise. Governors are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and fully involved in improving the school.

Pupils respond well to the significant challenges set for them and always try to do their best. As one pupil said, 'You have to work really hard, but you feel really good when you've done it!' Adults expect impeccable behaviour and that is what they get. Pupils listen carefully to the teacher and their hands shoot up to answer the teachers' questions. They work very well in groups and discuss one another's views sensibly. From the moment they enter the Reception class, the school gives pupils many opportunities to take responsibility and they do it very well. The school council is enterprising in its ideas and has made significant improvements in the provision of playground activities and the help given to any pupils who are lonely. Pupils are very much a part of the local community and enjoy strong links with the Church, the elderly and local charitable organisations. The school's mission statement requires pupils to 'grow in the understanding and living of the faith', and the work they have done on topics such as the Crucifixion and the need to care for the environment shows that they do.

Pupils are justified in feeling their teachers are exceptional and appreciate the way they make learning fun. Typically, lessons move at a fast pace and offer the right level of challenge to pupils of all ability. Question and answer sessions work really well because teachers give all pupils the confidence to contribute. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils of all ability played a part in drawing up a list of words to describe the character of the Big Bad Wolf. Lessons are a good balance between the teacher teaching new skills and pupils working at their own level to extend their learning. Teaching assistants are an important part of the team and work very closely with teachers to support pupils who need extra help.

An important factor in pupils' enjoyment of school and their rapid progress is the well-planned curriculum. While it has a strong focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills, it also provides much to give pupils a love of the arts. For example, the topic about the Great Fire of London gave pupils plenty of opportunities to write thrilling stories while providing the stimulus for

their stunning chalk pictures. The curriculum includes valuable work on how to stay safe and live healthy lives and pupils speak with authority on the best foods to eat, the importance of regular exercise and the dangers of smoking. This provision, together with pupils' excellent progress, ensures that pupils are fully prepared for the future.

Parents think highly of the school and the way it cares for their children so well. They describe the school as 'warm and caring' and a place where 'teachers go the extra mile to help our children succeed.' They appreciate the robust health and safety systems and know their children feel safe at school. Teachers are skilled at making it clear to pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. As a result, pupils know their personal targets and think about them carefully when doing their work. Systems to encourage regular attendance are exemplary, as can be seen from the high attendance rates. These many strengths explain why the school has made rapid progress since the last inspection and show that it is very well set to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision in the Reception class is outstanding. The high standard of teaching and exceptional attention paid to children's care and welfare mean that children make rapid progress so that, by the end of the year, their attainments exceed those typical of their ages in all areas. Parents enthuse about the way their children are 'learning in a happy and secure environment' and make such a smooth transition to school. The children develop their independence very well because the adults give them lots of opportunities to make decisions about their learning. This helps them develop into mature youngsters well prepared for Year 1. The assessments of children's progress provide accurate measures of their strengths and weaknesses, and adults use them effectively to plan future work. The curriculum is planned meticulously to give children a very good balance of academic work to improve their reading, writing and number skills and opportunities to develop their social skills through play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to write independently of the teacher to raise standards in writing still further.

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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	1
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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Leamington Spa, CV31 2LJ

Thank you for your important contributions to this inspection. It was a pleasure to meet so many of you who showed such enthusiasm for your school. I enjoyed talking to some of you who told me a lot about your school. I found that your school is outstanding.

What I found out about your school.

- You work hard and make excellent progress, especially in reading, mathematics and science.
- You have an outstanding knowledge of how to keep safe and live healthy lives.
- Your teachers do everything to make lessons fun and help you when you find things difficult.
- You love the activities planned for you and the wide range of visits and visitors that make learning interesting.
- You behave really well, both in class and around the school, and are very kind to each other.
- The staff and governors run the school exceptionally well and know how to make improvements.
- All the adults take very good care of you and are always there to help you if you are upset.

What I would like the school to do now.

- Help you to improve your writing still further by giving you more practice at working on your own. You can help by trying as hard as you can to write stories without asking for help from the teacher so much.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr Terry Elston Lead inspector