

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Devizes

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126488
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315570
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Nye 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	K Maidment
Headteacher	Sheila Jones
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2003
School address	St Joseph's Place Devizes SN10 1DD
Telephone number	01380 723084
Fax number	01380 723546

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a popular primary school with slightly more boys than girls. It is slightly smaller than average and the pupils come from wide-ranging socio-economic but mainly White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. There is a small number of pupils who speak English as a second language. The school has gone through a recent period of upheaval, with seven new staff appointments over the last year. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months. The school has achieved Investors in People, Financial Management Standard in Schools award, Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards.

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 and improving school with many strengths, particularly in pupils' personal development and well-being. The recent period of considerable upheaval resulted in a drop in standards, but good leadership and management has reversed this trend.

Parents are very supportive of the school, and although a minority feel that the school does not take sufficient account of their views and suggestions, most are very happy with the provision. One commented: 'We feel that the school provides everything we could hope for – educationally and socially' and this positive view is endorsed by almost all parents.

Children enter the school with skills and knowledge that is in line with expectations and they make good progress in the Foundation Stage. In last summer's national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, standards were average in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards were average in English, above average in mathematics, but below average in science. However, since then teaching has improved considerably and, as a result, inspection evidence shows that standards in English, mathematics and science are now rising and pupils are making good progress. Overall standards are now above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress, but some higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because there is a strong focus on spiritual, moral and social development, which results in pupils having a strong sense of responsibility. Behaviour is good and pupils treat each other and adults with politeness and respect. A particular strength is the way in which older pupils care for younger ones. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and they make an exceptionally positive contribution to the local and school community. Very good systems are in place to care for and support pupils. The assessment and marking of pupils' work, which ensures that they receive good guidance on how to improve, is of a very high standard in many classes, but this is not yet consistently embedded throughout the school. The curriculum is well designed and suitably meets the needs and interests of pupils.

The school is well led and managed at all levels because there is a clear sense of direction and a commitment to improve. Strategies to identify suitable priorities for development, which tackle past underachievement, are effective and standards are rising as a result. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to make further improvements in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision for the youngest children is good because it is well led and managed. Children settle in quickly because there are very good links with local pre-school providers, the induction process is very well planned and staff work well with parents. Children start school with broadly average skills and knowledge and, because the teaching is good, they make good progress in all the areas for learning. The teaching of phonics is a particular strength and, as a result, standards are higher than average in communications, language and literacy. The teachers and support staff go out of their way to ensure that children are happy. The teaching areas are bright and attractive and this enhances children's excitement about coming to school. Teaching is well resourced, although the outside area does not make the best use of the space or resources

available. Children are provided with a wide range of exciting activities, but some find it difficult to concentrate because they are given too many options during free choice sessions.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all higher-attaining pupils are appropriately challenged.
- Apply the high quality marking and assessment strategies consistently throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage with levels around those expected. They make good progress in the Reception Year, especially in reading and writing, and achieve above expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1. The most recent national tests at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2, although average overall, were disappointing because they indicated a declining picture from previously very high standards. This was because of staffing upheavals, which have now been resolved. Inspection evidence shows that because the school has been successful in improving teaching and learning, standards are steadily rising and are now above average. Pupils achieve well, particularly in Years 2 and 6, where progress is very good. In other classes, progress is good, although some higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Pupils make the best progress in English because of the recent focus on raising standards in writing.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress in relation to their starting points because of good teaching, the skilled and knowledgeable support of teaching assistants and the regular reviews of their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good, with some outstanding features. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They much enjoy coming to school and attendance is good, although a few are not sufficiently punctual. Behaviour is good, and rare instances of unkind or inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. The members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously and pupils display high levels of care and consideration for others. As one parent commented: 'I particularly like the way Year 6 children are encouraged to help the Reception children'. This is particularly evident in the care shown by older pupils to younger ones at lunchtimes. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles. They are enthusiastic about sport and take part in a wide range of clubs and sporting activities. They are aware of the importance of eating healthy meals, and the take-up of freshly prepared school meals is very high. Pupils demonstrate a very good awareness of how to keep safe because they have been well taught and are sensible, for example in their use of playground equipment. They are actively encouraged to make exceptionally positive contributions to the community through involvement in a range of community events. For example, older pupils held a 'bring and buy' sale and raised over £500. They are developing good communication, numeracy, team building and information and communication (ICT) skills which are preparing them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good because lessons are well planned and activities imaginatively focus on the needs and interests of the pupils. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and teaching assistants consistently and effectively support the learning throughout lessons. Accurate assessment is made of how well pupils understand what they are being taught and teachers are skilled at adjusting the teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress during the course of lessons. Even in larger classes, individual pupils' needs are recognised and supported; as one parent commented: 'Everyone is made to feel special.' In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning of the higher-attaining pupils slackens because they are not sufficiently challenged, particularly in mathematics.

Very good systems are being developed to assess and track pupils' progress. A strength is the way in which older pupils are encouraged to assess how well they are meeting their own targets. They often have a written dialogue with their teachers about their work and demonstrate a very mature understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and what they need to do to improve. This is having a very positive impact on achievement and standards, although it is not yet sufficiently well embedded throughout the school.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well taught because their work is carefully matched to their needs, which are accurately identified through regular and accurate assessment. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress because of good teaching and support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum takes good account of statutory requirements and provides a balanced range of classroom and other activities that meet the needs and interests of pupils. The curriculum is carefully planned, and pupils' positive curriculum experiences are reflected in the good quality of work displayed around the school, especially in writing and art, which makes it an attractive place in which to learn. The focus on improving writing is exemplified by the publication of a regular school newspaper, which is of a high standard. ICT supports the curriculum well and the focus on music is a strength. The school is currently adjusting the curriculum so that an even greater emphasis is placed on the progressive acquisition of key skills. This development promises to improve the curriculum even further, but it is too soon to judge the impact on standards and achievement. A wide range of sporting and cultural activities and events enriches the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents agree that the school is a very secure, happy place where their children are cared for very well. One commented, 'It nurtures each child.' All statutory requirements to ensure the health and safety of pupils are fully in place and rigorously applied. As a result, bullying is rare and all groups of pupils say that they feel safe and secure. Pupils who need extra support are particularly well cared for and there is good liaison with outside agencies to provide additional support. Accurate and detailed targets for improvement are identified and most pupils have a

good awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. The marking of pupils' work is usually very good, especially when it is positive, evaluative and provides clear guidance about how to improve their work further. In some instances, however, opportunities to relate marking to the progress that pupils are making towards their targets are missed, and the school is working hard to ensure a greater consistency in this area of its work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. Under the very effective leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who are ably supported by senior staff, the school has made considerable progress in turning a period of decline into a culture of improvement and high expectations. After a period of underachievement, pupils are now making good progress because the leadership of the school has resolved a number of staffing issues and has put in place very effective strategies to ensure that standards continue to rise. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the impact of these strategies, for example in ensuring that marking and assessment policies are embedded throughout the school. Curriculum leaders are very effective and have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. This is because they effectively monitor their subjects and identify suitable priorities for development. The school evaluates itself well. Extensive assessment data is gathered and this is well used to inform whole-school improvement planning and set challenging but achievable targets. As a result, there is a strong and increasingly successful focus on raising standards.

Teaching and support staff are very well trained and the school is well equipped, particularly in ICT. Resources are well organised; for example, the library is extensive and easily accessible to pupils. Governors know the school well and provide an effective balance of challenge and support.

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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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1
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

12 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School, Devizes SN10 1DD

Thank you for being so very polite and friendly when we visited your school. We particularly appreciated the card that the Year 6 children gave us when we left! This letter is to let you know what we found out about your school, which we think is a good one!

We were really impressed with how well you get on with each other and the sensible way in which you help each other out and make your community a better place. The older children are really kind and caring to the younger ones. You are well looked after by the adults and you have a very good understanding about how to keep yourselves safe and healthy. Because your lessons are interesting and you are well taught, you are now making good progress, and standards in English, mathematics and science have improved a lot this year. Well done!

The people who are in charge of the school do a very good job and have improved things a lot recently. There are two things which we have asked them to do to make things even better, and you can help by making sure that you are all in school on time at the start of the day.

- Make sure that those of you who find learning easy are challenged to do even better work.
- Make sure that the marking and assessment of your work is as good as the best in your school.

Many thanks again for making us so welcome.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye Her Majesty's Inspector