

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101236
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	323426
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Coussins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	358
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Noreen Brooks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Carol Hooton (Acting)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 December 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Connor Road Dagenham RM9 5UL
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8270 6480

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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**Fax number**

020 8595 5061

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is larger than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average as is the proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These relate mainly to moderate learning and speech, language and communication needs. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is above average, the largest group being from Black African backgrounds. The Early Years Foundation Stage classes are located in an annexe with a public right of way separating it from the main building. Fifty-two children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis and the rest are organised into two Reception classes. The school runs a Breakfast Club. The school has the Investors in People and Healthy School awards. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have led the school since September 2008. An advisory headteacher has supported them for two days a week since January. A new headteacher has recently been appointed to start in September 2009.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It successfully includes families from many backgrounds and this has resulted in a happy working community. There is a good ethos within which all pupils feel valued and included. The school provides good pastoral care for its pupils and this contributes effectively to their good personal development and well-being, including good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors were very impressed with pupils' politeness and courtesy at all times and their enthusiasm and willingness to express how much they liked their school and enjoyed their learning. Pupils behave very well and feel very safe. Most parents are supportive of the school. One wrote, 'My child enjoys St Joseph's. The teachers work hard and are good role models'.

After a period of turbulence due to staffing difficulties, the acting headteacher, well supported by the advisory headteacher and governors, has taken effective action to arrest underachievement, which resulted in the decline in standards seen in the 2008 test results at the end of Key Stage 2. The focus has been on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This has been increasingly successful and teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall and the tracking of pupils' progress is enabling the school to more quickly identify any underachievement. The impact of this is particularly notable in Years 5 and 6 where good teaching has accelerated pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics. Inspection evidence, school data and pupils' work show that, given their starting points, which are below expectations, achievement is now satisfactory. Pupils are currently on track to attain average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and thereby meet the school's challenging targets. Pupils who have moderate learning or speech, language and communication difficulties make similar progress to others because of the inclusive ethos and the extra help provided for them.

The school's improvement is the result of better teaching. Planning and the use of assessment have been improved, and there is a sharper focus on identifying pupils who need extra support, and on providing it. Pupils are benefiting from teaching Years 5 and 6 in discrete groups rather than in mixed-age classes. There remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, the progress of some more able pupils dips because the work set for them is not always sufficiently challenging. There are some examples of effective marking, which informs pupils of where they are and gives helpful points for improvement. This is not consistent in all classes. Leaders recognise that teaching and learning need to be better and more consistent across the school if they are to more rapidly raise standards further. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are happy, secure and have positive relationships with adults and other children. They play amicably together, sharing equipment and space. Children experience a balance of activities led by adults and those where they can make their own choices. However, activities often lack interest and excitement to engage and motivate the children to enliven their learning and encourage their independence. The school is aware of this, and plans to develop the outside area to provide more meaningful and exciting learning experiences are underway.

A strong focus is given to personal, social and health and physical education, which, along with the school's work to gain the Healthy School Award, makes a worthwhile contribution to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Music is a strength of the school, with a large choir that enjoys taking part in numerous concerts and performances. The quality of singing is impressive. The curriculum is satisfactory, with a good focus on mathematics and literacy. There are, however, too few opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in

other subjects. The school has correctly identified the need for a review of the curriculum to plan work that makes links across different subjects to make learning more meaningful, exciting and relevant.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting and advisory headteachers have an accurate picture of what is working well and what needs to improve. Areas for improvement are identified and the acting and advisory headteachers work well together to successfully tackle them. Governors support the school well and are active in the life of the school. Several subject leaders and key staff are new to their posts and their role is developing. They make a satisfactory contribution to school improvement. They provide useful guidance for colleagues but opportunities to monitor the quality of provision, especially teaching and learning, are not consistent in all areas. Support from the local authority has also helped to raise standards. The school recognises that work needs to continue to accelerate the progress of pupils while maintaining pupils' good personal skills and enjoyment. There is satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children and their families benefit from good links between home and school. Opportunities for children to visit the school before they start help them to settle quickly. Their personal, social and emotional development is given high priority and, as a result, they do well in this area. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and recent improvements in planning ensure that all areas of learning are covered. Children start with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their ages and, given these starting points, their achievement is satisfactory. Many children reach the early learning goals at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, on entering Year 1, children's attainment remains below expectations in communication, language and literacy skills, knowledge and understanding of the world and number work. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The individual needs of children are known and staff are trialling a system of recording their observations, but this is at an early stage and assessment information is not used fully in planning next steps.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards by eliminating inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Develop the role of subject leaders and key leaders to increase their impact on school improvement.
- Ensure that activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide interesting and exciting experiences both indoors and outside to develop the children's learning in a meaningful way and encourage their independence.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils are currently achieving satisfactorily and are on course to reach their targets of average standards by the end of Year 6. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average and this is reflected in the national assessments for these

pupils in most recent years. The provisional results for pupils in Year 6 fell in 2008. Standards were below average and many pupils underachieved. Standards were well below average in mathematics. The school's efforts to raise standards, and to close the gap between pupils' performance in English and mathematics, are paying off. This is particularly the case in Years 5 and 6, where improved teaching means that pupils' progress is accelerating well. As a result, pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach average standards, a considerable improvement on the previous year. Across the school, pupils who have learning difficulties, including those with moderate learning and speech, language and communication difficulties, make similar progress to their classmates. The progress made by the more able pupils slows when the work is insufficiently challenging. Consequently, the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in the 2008 tests was much lower than that found nationally. The work of current pupils in Year 6 shows that more pupils are on track to reach the higher level because lessons are more demanding. There is scope to extend this increased challenge across the rest of the school.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and enjoy coming to school. As a result, attendance is above average. They are very polite, friendly and well mannered. Behaviour is good in class and around the school and pupils feel safe and secure. Relationships are very good between adults and children and among the pupils. One pupil said that they like their teachers because, 'They treat us well and they are kind'. Pupils are thoughtful and considerate towards each other. They appreciate social and cultural differences and, as a result, work and play together well. These attributes, and a clear understanding of the school's values, mean that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of staying healthy by eating a balanced diet and keeping fit, and they participate enthusiastically in the range of physical activities that are offered. Pupils contribute well to the local community through many sports and musical events and the school council has a strong voice in the school. Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given and take them seriously. There is scope for providing more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility in the school. Pupils' good personal skills and improving standards in basic skills are helping to prepare the pupils adequately for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Satisfactory teaching ensures that pupils make sound progress. Positive relationships and pupils' good behaviour help ensure that lessons are well organised and run smoothly. Consequently, teachers are able to concentrate on helping pupils to learn. Teachers' planning is clear about what pupils are expected to learn and how they will judge their success. These objectives are shared clearly with pupils at the start of lessons. Teaching assistants ensure that pupils who need extra help get it. Steps have been taken to improve the quality of teaching. Greatest success has been achieved in Years 5 and 6, where lessons are typified by brisk pace, probing questioning and good use of technology to capture pupils' interest and extend their learning. For example, in a successful mathematics lesson in Year 6, the teacher made good use of a 'digital visualiser' (which projects a live image onto the interactive whiteboard) to show pupils how to work out percentages using a calculator. Elsewhere, improvements to planning are helping to ensure that pupils make the progress expected of them, but inconsistencies remain.

For example, although teachers' planning highlights how the objectives for the lesson will be modified for pupils of different ability, in too many lessons there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum places clear emphasis on improving English and mathematics. There is still more to do to make learning more meaningful and purposeful by linking together different subjects and giving pupils opportunities to apply their basic skills across the curriculum. A satisfactory range of extra activities, visits and visitors to school enriches pupils' personal development. Pupils value these as they do the after school clubs where they can, for example, participate in sporting activities or learn new skills such as gardening. Pupils suggested that more clubs were provided and the school acted upon this. There is, however, more scope to provide a wider range of activities particularly for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Special focus events allow pupils to explore subjects in depth and these contribute much to pupils' personal development, as evident in the Cultural Diversity Day, which helped pupils to understand, for example, the food, clothes, cultures and faiths of others. Personal, social and health education, sports activities and music are strengths of the school and given high priority, leading to good standards in these areas.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. However, the school takes good care of its pupils. Pupils' social, emotional and pastoral needs are given a high priority. As a result, they enjoy learning and playing in the school's supportive atmosphere. There are good procedures to keep pupils safe and secure, and pupils report that they can approach an adult if they have concerns. Appropriate steps are taken to check on the suitability of adults to work with children. Good procedures help smooth the transition between Reception and Year 1, so that pupils settle quickly. Pupils attending the breakfast club are well looked after. They enjoy the activities on offer: as one pupil said, 'It's great. It helps set you up for the day'. Academic guidance and support are satisfactory. Improved procedures to assess and track pupils' progress are starting to ensure that those who find learning difficult get the support they need. Systems to support pupils identified as gifted or talented are at an early stage. Most pupils have a secure knowledge of the targets they are set for their learning, although inconsistencies in marking mean that they sometimes lack the precise detail of how they can improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Satisfactory leadership has ensured that the school has successfully tackled areas of weakness. The strategies established by the leadership of the school have resulted in increasing numbers of good lessons. These in turn have led to better progress, and a halt to the decline in standards seen since the previous year. The school recognises that work needs to continue to accelerate the progress of pupils. Subject leaders, many of whom are new to their roles, make a satisfactory contribution to school improvement. They provide some effective guidance for colleagues but opportunities to monitor the quality of provision, especially teaching and learning, are not consistent in all areas. Governance is satisfactory and the governing body is developing more robust procedures to hold the school to account for its performance. Governors have supported



the school well through a period of instability at senior management level. Community cohesion is satisfactory because the school works effectively with its parents and partners in the local community and has strong links with the Church, but has yet to develop international links. One parent wrote, 'My children love the school because both pupils and their teachers are like one big family'. The school promotes good knowledge, understanding and tolerance of a culturally diverse population both locally and nationally although there remain some hard-to-reach groups in the local community. The school satisfactorily develops pupils' understanding and awareness of global issues through the Church and its charity work.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

12 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Dagenham, RM9 5UL

I am writing to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. Thank you for talking to us about your work and telling us what you think about your school. Your school is satisfactory which means you learn new things steadily, but there is still more to do to make the school even better.

These are the things that are best about your school.

- You enjoy coming to school and get on very well with each other and all of the staff.
- Your behaviour is good which helps you learn in your lessons.
- You know how to stay healthy and safe.
- Everyone in the school cares for you very well.

We have asked the school to do the following important things.

- Help you to improve the standards you reach in English, mathematics and science by making sure that all your lessons are taught well in all classes, that your work is just right for you and by letting you know how you can improve.
- Check carefully on everything that goes on in school. This is to make sure things can improve more quickly and so that everyone can expect you to do even better in your lessons.
- Improve the outdoor areas for the Nursery and Reception classes so that the activities are more exciting and meaningful to help keep the children interested and learn as well as they can. You might have some good ideas and suggestions for this.

We were very impressed with the way you all get on so well together and look after each other at work and play. We were also lucky enough to hear your fantastic singing in assembly and in the choir rehearsal.

Thank you again for all your help and for being so friendly and interesting to talk to. My very best wishes to you all for your future.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Coussins

Lead Inspector