

St Joseph's RC Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101337
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	323452
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Frances Fenton
Headteacher	Mrs Irene Ciapryna
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2006
School address	Watford Way Hendon London NW4 4TY
Telephone number	020 8202 5229
Fax number	020 8202 5530

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation; national data and the school's own assessment records; policies and minutes; observation of lessons; interviews with senior members of staff, governors and pupils; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than that normally found nationally. The majority of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is Black or Black British - African. The number of pupils whose first language is other than English is much higher than is typically found. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (mainly speech and communication difficulties) is below that seen nationally but the proportion of pupils with a statement of educational need is very high. The school hall had to be demolished recently because it was structurally unsound and this has caused great disturbance to the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Joseph's is an outstanding school. Pupils flourish in this exceptionally caring and welcoming school so that they make outstanding progress in their academic and personal development. Pivotal in its success is inspirational leadership by the headteacher and her excellent deputy and the exceptional teamwork of all staff. Parents overwhelmingly agree and are totally supportive of the work of the school and have great confidence in the headteacher. One parent summed up the views of many when saying 'This is a wonderful school. My son is so lucky he attends St Joseph's.' Pupils are rightly proud of their school and confirm that they are very happy and extremely well cared for.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They start in Year 3 with skills above those expected for their age overall. An extremely strong emphasis on promoting children's personal and social needs results in pupils growing into independent, confident young learners, eager to embrace all the school has to offer. All pupils make excellent progress as they move through the school. This is because staff are ambitious for their pupils and fervent in their aim to get the best from each one, academically and personally. Rigorous assessment and tracking systems in English, mathematics and science, ensure teachers pay close attention to the progress each pupil makes. The rigour with which the school assesses progress in these three core subjects is not always applied to pupils' work in information and communication technology (ICT) and other school subjects. However, plans are well in hand to rectify this. Staff address any identified gaps in pupils' learning with programmes of work to help them catch up exceptionally well. When pupils leave Year 6, standards are consistently exceptionally high and pupils' achievement places the school in the top 1% of schools in the country. Pupils achieve well not just because teaching and learning are excellent and leadership of the school is outstanding, but because they are encouraged to see their potential and are given the self-confidence to work hard and aim high.

The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, provides outstanding leadership and this is at the heart of this very effective school. The leadership team and the school's subject leaders rigorously monitor all areas of the school's work. This results in sustained, exceptionally high-quality teaching and learning and in the very high standards achieved by learners. Staff are both supportive and uncompromising in their pursuit of outstanding provision and outcomes in all areas of the school. The school improvement plan shows a richness in its aims for developing confident, skilled and successful young people. Governors hold the school to account very well for its work. Despite the loss of its school hall, the school uses its resources and accommodation imaginatively and efficiently and offers outstanding value for money. The school has outstanding capacity for further improvement because performance in all areas of school life is evaluated accurately and because there is a determination from staff at all levels to sustain and build upon the many gains of recent years. There is a strong sense of teamwork and pride in what has already been achieved but the school is not at all complacent. While celebrating existing strengths and successes, it knows exactly what to do to sustain its excellence. The school has been successful not only in maintaining and extending its outstanding status from the last inspection, but in sustaining a whole-school belief that every pupil and every family are treated as individuals and their unique needs met.

In addition to the very strong leadership, there are many interlinking features that contribute to pupils' exceptionally high achievement. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers deliver their lessons with the learning style of each pupil in mind. For instance, in a Year 6 lesson, a video of Maradona's famous 'Hand of God' incident was used to stimulate

pupils' interests and imaginations and to bring their English lesson to life in a meaningful and memorable way. Consequently, in these lively and challenging lessons all pupils make rapid progress while thoroughly enjoying their learning. Pupils' attitudes to school are excellent because they feel valued and know their contributions are respected and important to staff. Highly skilled support assistants enable those pupils with speech and language difficulties and those whose first language is other than English to make the same outstanding progress as their peers.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school. Attendance is well above average and behaviour is impeccable. Pupils treat their classmates and others with dignity and respect. They display an enviable generosity of spirit, support a range of national and global charities and are always concerned, through the recently established Eco Council, to take care of the environment. Pupils have a keen awareness of religions and cultures different from their own. For instance, they talk with great enthusiasm about their annual visit to the Hindu temple and about members of the local Jewish community who regularly come into school to give talks to the pupils. They know why it is important to eat healthily and to keep fit. Pupils offer visitors accurate advice on what makes a healthy diet and take an active part in the many games and sports activities open to them. The school council does much to represent the views of pupils in all years and is proud to share what it has done to promote healthy and safe lifestyles and to develop enterprise skills. School council members are energetically engaged in a range of imaginative schemes to raise money for the rebuilding of their school hall which had to be demolished a little while ago. Pupils' knowledge of different cultures in a diverse society is strong because community cohesion is an exemplary feature of the school. Indeed, it is central to all the pupils learn and do and so all groups of pupils consistently make valuable contributions to life in school and the wider community. Staff have created a school in which all pupils work and play exceedingly well together.

An exceptionally varied curriculum inspires pupils to work hard and gain a very wide range of skills. It makes an impressive contribution to pupils' personal and social development. Music, drama and physical education make particularly strong contributions to pupils' learning and confidence and they talk excitedly about their growing competence in Spanish. The outstanding range of out-of-class activities, including pre-school tae kwon do, has a huge impact on pupils' enjoyment of school and does much to foster their independence, teamwork and confidence. Care, support and guidance are of the highest order and the talented team of teaching assistants does everything it can to make sure that pupils who sometimes find their work difficult, and those identified as vulnerable, all feel valued. This results in happy learners who overcome any difficulties quickly. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are rigorous and fully meet current guidelines. Academic guidance is comprehensive and, as a result, pupils are fully aware of their current performance and of what they need to do to improve their standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop rigorous assessment systems in all subjects.

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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 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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

04 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Junior School, London, NW4 4TY

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. You were all very friendly and helpful and I enjoyed finding out from you how much you enjoy learning. I particularly enjoyed watching the choir at lunchtime and the early morning tae kwon do! You told me that you think your school is excellent. I'm sure that you will be pleased to know that I agree with your opinion and indeed you do have an outstanding school.

You are right to be proud of your school. Here are some of the really good things I found out about it.

- You continue to make outstanding progress as you move through the school and, by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach exceptionally high standards in all your subjects. This is because the teaching you receive is outstanding and you also work very hard.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you look after each other so well. You enjoy working in groups and you like to help your classmates when they find things difficult. Members of the school council work hard to find out what you think and, as a result, have made your school even better. You particularly like the very wide range of extra-curricular events, the out-of-school clubs and trips and you take a full part in lots of arts, sports and music activities.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants take very good care of you. They make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. They also give you a lot of advice about how you can improve your work. Your outstanding headteacher and all your other teachers know exactly how to make sure that your school continues to stay so good.

The one thing I have asked the school to do to make it even better is to make your assessments in all your subjects as good as those you have in English, mathematics and science.

Please continue to work hard and keep helping your teachers to make sure that St Joseph's stays an outstanding place in which to learn. I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Merchant

Lead Inspector