

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103090
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	323753
Inspection date	15 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	201
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	52
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gregory Joseph
Headteacher	Mrs Maryanne Lecount
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Marsh Lane London E10 7BL
Telephone number	020 8539 3000
Fax number	020 8558 1049

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage; how well the school meets the needs of gifted and talented pupils and the extent to which the school promotes community cohesion. The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. 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 its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school has a 26 place Nursery as part of its Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Nine out of ten pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being Black African. About a quarter of pupils speak an additional language to English. A third of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, a high proportion. These include speech and language problems, and behavioural and emotional difficulties. The school has the Healthy Schools award, a Sustainable Travel award, the Activemark, the silver Artsmark and the Investors in People award.

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 that meets the needs and aspirations of all its pupils well. Consistently good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well and that standards are generally above average in reading, writing and mathematics. It is a happy and friendly school, whose positive ethos and Christian values contribute considerably to the outstanding personal development and well-being of pupils and their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The experienced leadership team has a good understanding of how well the school is doing and where it needs to improve.

'The school is very inclusive and welcoming to all students and parents regardless of their background and ability,' a parent wrote, reflecting the high regard that parents have for the school. The pastoral care of pupils is exemplary, with provision made for a wide range of individual needs. The school draws on outside expertise effectively to supplement its own work and to give guidance and support to staff. For example, programmes introduced by the speech therapist are implemented by a teaching assistant to help pupils with speech and language difficulties. The learning mentor plays an important role in settling pupils who have social and behavioural difficulties and in supporting families. The school keeps parents of children with learning difficulties extremely well informed about how they are progressing. This includes sending a termly letter that comments on targets and makes suggestions for help they can give at home.

Pupils make good progress because the work interests them and matches their level of ability well. Teachers track pupils' performance effectively and predict each term how well they should do. Regular meetings with senior leaders identify pupils who need particular support and ensure they receive programmes to help them catch up. In this way, everybody achieves well, including pupils who are learning English as an additional language. The curriculum effectively caters for their development, with practical activities, visual aids and an emphasis on the spoken word. As a result of this systematic approach to learning pupils usually reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. In 2008, standards in reading and mathematics were closer to average because of high levels of need in that particular year group, but the present Year 2 are already performing above expectations. Teachers successfully employ a variety of methods to make learning enjoyable, including using technology in the classroom and encouraging pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner. Most activities have a definite aim, although occasionally the relevance is not made sufficiently clear and pupils are unsure how the task builds on their previous learning.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. One said, 'It's a happy school: lots of people make friends.' Attendance is above average, and pupils say they feel safe and valued. Behaviour is impeccable. Pupils show care and concern for one another, and will go out of their way to include others in their games. Playground 'buddies' take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils make healthy choices and take plenty of exercise, benefiting from sports coaching from a local football club. They know how to take care of themselves and trust staff to share their concerns. Pupils have a good knowledge of one another's cultures and take part in activities with pupils from another local school, whose mix of cultures varies from their own. They raise large amounts of money for international charities. The school council takes pupils' ideas and helps to improve the school environment. Pupils grow in confidence and are well prepared for junior school.

The curriculum makes a very positive contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development and their enjoyment of school, as well as promoting their understanding of the world around them. Events such as International Day bring the whole community together, with parents running workshops for the pupils as they celebrate different cultures through music, cooking, art and dance. Pupils go on a wide range of trips, both locally and further afield, including to the Natural History Museum, and many visitors come to the school. These have included a string quartet and a Brazilian martial arts team. Pupils of all ages are able to attend a good variety of clubs. There is a special club for gifted and talented pupils to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. The school caters well for these pupils, ensuring that plans provide challenge in lesson, and giving open-ended tasks to do at home, such as writing a holiday journal.

Pupils receive helpful guidance and support from staff, usually through discussing their work with them. They have targets displayed on classroom walls, but these are not very prominent or specific and pupils are unclear which apply to them, or how they will know when they have met them. The school has identified this as an area to develop with a much more explicit emphasis on pupils' achieving their curriculum targets. The leadership and management of the school are good. Leaders at all levels monitor closely its work and make accurate judgements about priorities for improvement. The headteacher and deputy headteacher give the school clear direction that has a positive impact in forming a strong staff team dedicated to raising standards and achievement. Recent initiatives, such as the introduction of a structured phonics scheme, have improved pupils' reading and writing. The school works extremely effectively with parents, translating newsletters into three languages, and providing a range of workshops for them. The governing body is representative of the local community and fulfils its responsibilities well. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and is well-placed to continue to improve further. Its value for money is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children receive a good start to their education in the well-organised EYFS. The majority of children enter the Nursery with skills that are broadly as expected in most areas of learning, although there are increasing numbers who are not as fluent in their speaking and communication skills. The children settle in quickly, due to the well-planned play activities and the calm purposeful atmosphere. Children make good progress in their learning. There has been a significant improvement in children's ability to link sounds and letters as a result of an emphasis on phonics and this is having a positive influence on standards reached in later years in the school. Exciting activities to support learning through play are resulting in increasing numbers of children who leave the EYFS with skills and understanding that are above what is expected for their age. However, Reception children do not have enough opportunity to choose to work outside during independent activities so that they can broaden and enhance their learning still further. The EYFS is led and managed well, with a strong emphasis on assessing how well children are doing and catering for their individual needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure Reception children have better access to the outdoor area during independent activities.
- Give greater emphasis to pupils' curriculum targets so that they all know what they are and when they have met them.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, London, E10 7BL

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I enjoyed meeting you and agree that yours is a good school. Here are some of the things that you do particularly well.

- You make good progress and reach above average standards by the end of Year 2.
- The teaching helps you to learn well and is interesting and exciting.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you look after one another very well.
- You all help to make the school a special place by taking a full part in all it has to offer, including going to clubs.
- The school cares for you all extremely well.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher run the school well and know everything that is going on.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start. It would be helpful for Reception children to be able to choose activities outside sometimes to develop their independence. Your teachers explain to you how well you are doing, but you are not always sure what you have to do to improve. I have suggested this is made clearer to you so that you know what your targets are and how you can meet them.

Thank you once again for your help. My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr N Butt

Lead Inspector