

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103842
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	323912
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Sally Noble

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	266
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	90
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Chalk
Headteacher	Dennis Cody
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hillcrest Road Dudley DY2 7PW
Telephone number	01384 818925

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2008
Inspection number	323912

Fax number

01384 818930

Age group	3-11
Inspection dates	15-16 October 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This slightly larger than average sized primary school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. The majority of pupils are White British, but an above average proportion come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who do not speak English as a first language has increased significantly in recent years and is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The enthusiastic, committed staff team are determined to offer the best possible education for the pupils in their care. The inclusion of all pupils is of paramount importance and parents overwhelmingly appreciate this. One comment, typical of many others, was, 'What I like most about the school is that the teachers have a very nice relationship with all the children and they are caring.'

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards are average by the time pupils leave Year 6, but this represents good progress in relation to their starting points. Standards are higher in reading, mathematics and science than in writing, which is a major focus for improvement in the school development plan. Teaching is good overall and this is reflected in the rate of pupils' progress. Work in mathematics is developed effectively because activities are challenging and well matched to pupils' individual needs. Writing activities are fun and motivating but the main features of writing are not taught systematically enough, and pupils are not given the opportunity to evaluate and improve their written work. Pupils do not always use the skills they have learned in writing in other subjects. The school collects information on pupils' progress and uses it well to target work for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to identify other groups who are at risk of underachieving.

The school is a safe haven for the pupils. All staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure at school. This family centred approach extends to all staff, teaching and non-teaching. Behaviour is good and the pupils have a good understanding of rights and responsibilities. This is because adults invest the time to listen to pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and most offer advice to pupils on how to improve. However, pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets and they are not given enough time to respond to marking to improve their work.

The curriculum has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It is broader, more relevant and exciting. This is resulting in high levels of pupil enjoyment and good personal development and well-being. Pupils particularly enjoy the creative days, especially the regular 'Free up Fridays'. The school council is a strength of the school, much appreciated by both pupils and parents. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community, especially through fund raising for a range of charities and their Eco work.

Leadership and management are good. The hard work of the senior leadership team has successfully accelerated pupils' progress in Key Stage 2, improved transition from the EYFS into Year 1, and developed pupils' personal qualities. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, enabling it to identify and prioritise the right areas for development. Leaders set challenging targets and take action to bring about improvement. However, new initiatives are not always evaluated quickly enough. This occasionally restricts the view leaders have of school improvement and has slowed the pace of improvement in writing. Nevertheless, the school's track record over recent years shows there is good capacity to make further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision in the Nursery and the Reception class is good and leads to children making good progress in all areas of learning. Though standards are below average on entry to Year 1, particularly in literacy and numeracy, children have achieved well from their low

attainment on starting school. All staff are aware of the needs of children of this age and ensure that they are provided with an exciting, safe and stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment. Activities are practical and build well on children's own experiences and interests. As a result, children of all abilities and backgrounds maintain their interest and concentrate well. Early number and literacy work is well planned and delivered. Children then practise skills learnt in a wide range of creative play situations.

A high priority is placed on children's personal development and welfare, as many enter school with low social skills, and children make particularly good progress in this aspect of their development. Relationships between adults and children are excellent and children respond by behaving very well. The children really enjoy innovative activities such as the use of digital video, and large-scale construction with cardboard and other 'found' materials, and they are keen to do their best. Induction and transition procedures are good. Staff regularly check children's progress, but the information gained is not always used effectively to set work that is sufficiently challenging. A knowledgeable and dedicated member of the senior leadership team manages the recently formed EYFS team well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teachers' expectations of pupils' writing to ensure that writing is at least at the same level in other subjects as it is in literacy work.
- Give pupils the opportunity to improve their work by breaking down the learning into smaller steps and giving them time to respond to teachers' marking.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are very low when the children enter the school, and they are below average at the end of Year 2. Good teaching and learning result in pupils making good progress, so that by the time they leave the school, they have attained broadly average standards in mathematics and reading, and above average standards in science. Pupils make satisfactory progress in writing, and while standards are still below average in Year 6, they are improving. Pupils' progress is improving in Years 1 and 2 due to a more active and creative curriculum in Year 1 that helps children to build on what they have learned in the EYFS. School data show that progress accelerates further in Years 3 to 6. This is because staff accurately target pupils to ensure that they do not slip behind. Standards in mathematics have improved steadily as the whole-school focus on developing calculation and problem solving has taken effect. However, none of the more able pupils reach the above average writing standards of which they are capable. This is because their writing skills are not developed well enough and they do not consolidate or extend them when writing in different subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and pupils at an early stage of learning English achieve well because of the well targeted extra support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school successfully promotes good relationships, trust and respect for others. Pupils learn about the diversity of British society and the beliefs and customs of different groups in the local area and the wider world. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils were keen to share a book on black role models that they had written themselves. Pupils behave well. They are polite and feel safe from bullying

and racism. Their enjoyment of school is evident in the way they talk about it with pride. The very successful school council ensures that young people's views are valued. One parent commented, 'My children enjoy being taught at St Joseph's. They have a well run school council, where they can make suggestions and air their views.'

Pupils make informed decisions to support charities at home and abroad on a regular basis. They develop their decision-making and enterprise skills through a range of creative activities. These include running mini-business projects, promoting recycling and developing an Eco garden. Attendance is satisfactory. It is carefully monitored and the school is doing all it can to promote and celebrate good attendance. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles through sensible eating habits and enjoying physical exercise, for example, in the wide range of sporting and fitness activities in school. Pupils are prepared well for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The pupils' successful learning is underpinned by the good relationships that exist between them, and the trust and confidence fostered in the good relationships between pupils and adults. Teachers use a wide variety of resources, including information and communication technology, to engage pupils. Calculation skills are taught very effectively and there are good opportunities for pupils to solve problems in both mathematics and science. Writing skills are not taught systematically enough as the pupils move through the school. This results in pupils not having a clear understanding of the quality of work they should be producing in literacy lessons and in their writing in other subjects. Teachers are good at questioning pupils to draw out their knowledge and understanding. Work is marked regularly, but only a small minority of pupils are given the opportunity to respond to teachers' marking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is vibrant and engages the pupils well. The school has made very good progress in providing more opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their skills in art, design and technology and music since the last inspection. Pupils have the opportunity to learn musical instruments and are involved in a number of musical events within and outside school. Music, design and technology, and art are also a regular part of the 'creative' days. The curriculum in Year 1 has been well adapted to ensure that it is practical and meets the needs of all learners by building on effective EYFS practice. Opportunities for cross-curricular learning are evident in activities such as 'Brain Builders' in Year 5. However, the curriculum is not planned carefully enough to ensure that writing develops across all subject areas. The wide range of sports activities and opportunities for pupils to take part in, and the range of clubs available to them is an undoubted strength of the school. Good use is made of visits, visitors and a range of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is good and provides pupils with a secure environment in which they feel safe and their views valued. Arrangements for child protection are rigorous and all relevant risk

assessments are in place. This enables all pupils, whatever their background or ability, to make good progress in this inclusive school.

The school has adequate systems for tracking and recording pupils' progress from year to year, and assessment information is used to plan work and to tackle any underachievement. However, the school does not then evaluate the impact of these actions in a systematic way. Pupils have targets but the consistency with which they are used varies and pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The calm and dedicated leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team has been an important factor in establishing the high levels of support and trust within the local community. The senior leadership team successfully develops the school community by promoting good relationships between pupils from different backgrounds and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Parents appreciate this and are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. The senior leadership team is strongly focused on raising standards and achievement. Leaders take effective action to bring about improvement, as is seen in the strategies introduced to improve pupils' calculation skills in mathematics, the improvement in pupils' progress and the development of a more relevant curriculum. However, checking to see if such strategies are proving successful is not frequent enough to give leaders a full picture of how to improve writing. Opportunities for staff to develop their professional expertise are good. Leaders establish strong links between outside services and other organisations that promote and enhance pupils' learning and personal development. Governors support the school well and are involved fully in helping it to improve.

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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	3
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?	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	3
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	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

17 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Dudley, DY2 7PW

Thank you very much for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We really appreciated the way you greeted us, and your polite and very welcoming manner. We know that you are really proud of your school and we really enjoyed being there. We agree with your parents and carers when they say that St Joseph's is a good school.

These are the main things we found out about your school.

- It is a very friendly place to work and play.
- You make good progress in your learning.
- You behave very well.
- The headteacher and all the staff are caring, and you and your parents and carers appreciate this.
- You are provided with lots of interesting clubs and after school activities.
- You are good at looking after each other and raising money for charities.

In order to make the school even better than it is, we have asked the adults who run it to:

- help you improve the quality of all your writing
- break your learning down into smaller steps and give you more time to follow up the suggestions they make in your books for improving your work.

You can help your school to improve by making sure you regularly check and improve your work and write more good pieces of writing.

Yours sincerely

Sally Noble Lead inspector