

St Joseph the Worker RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105961
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	324305
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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)	152
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr L Devany
Headteacher	Mrs Jennifer Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cutnook Lane Irlam Salford Lancashire M44 6GX

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools and has an Early Years Foundation Stage unit which provides full-time education in the Nursery and Reception classes. Numbers on roll have fallen over recent years leading to a reduction in staffing and currently, there is a vacancy for the post of deputy headteacher. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, although this does not fully reflect the range of social conditions in the area. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and most speak English as their first language. Very few are in the early stages of speaking English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national average, although none of these pupils has a statement of special educational need.

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 that has some good features. Pupils feel extremely safe in school because they are well cared for. This is appreciated by parents, who typically comment on the happy atmosphere and the hard work of all the staff. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and supportive. Pupils clearly enjoy school. The strong focus on Christian values and equality of opportunity is reflected in the way that pupils treat everyone with respect and in their good behaviour. They are keen to make a good contribution to the school community through their involvement with the school council, the eco-committee and their roles as Zone Park leaders. The rich curriculum is particularly effective at supporting pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils appreciate the wide variety of clubs on offer and links with the high school help provide extended opportunities for those who are talented in sport and the arts. The good provision for personal, social and health education ensures that pupils know how to keep healthy and they are extremely well informed about how to keep safe.

Although children start Nursery with skills a little below those typical for their age, they get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the time they join Year 1 they have reached national expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 and 2 and usually reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. In 2008, standards dipped and were below average at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils had not made adequate progress in mathematics and, consequently, standards in mathematics were well below average. Support from the local authority, along with better subject leadership has helped the school to strengthen the curriculum and improve teaching in mathematics. As a result, progress in mathematics has improved to satisfactory. There is, however, variation in the amount of progress made in different classes, reflecting variations in the quality of provision. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress overall. Their progress in mathematics is slower than their progress in reading and writing.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving because the work set, particularly in mathematics is being more carefully matched to pupils' needs. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory, although pastoral care is good, there are weaknesses in academic guidance that slows pupils' progress. The quality of marking is variable and the use of learning targets is limited. Consequently, pupils are often unclear about how well they are doing and what they need do to further improve their work.

Satisfactory leadership and management have established a caring ethos which radiates from the headteacher. Staff are hardworking and committed but, until recently, the focus on achievement and standards had been deflected by the urgent necessity to deal with a deficient budget that arose through a decrease in the number of pupils attending the school. This allowed standards to slip, although they are now recovering. Reductions in staffing have been dealt with effectively, although there is still a vacancy for a deputy headteacher. Those who have stepped into the breach have embraced their new responsibilities with great enthusiasm. However, senior and middle leaders have yet to fully develop their skills in monitoring and evaluation, and particularly in the analysis of data. The school has a plethora of information about pupils' standards and how well they are progressing, but it is not analysed effectively to quickly identify individual pupils or groups of pupils at risk of underachieving and to take effective action. Nor is it used properly to hold teachers to account or to inform self-evaluation. As a result, the school's view of several aspects of its work is over positive. Nevertheless, the

main weaknesses have been recognised and there have been important improvements to standards in mathematics illustrating the satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as they are able to learn well in this safe supportive environment. Parents are understandably pleased with provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage recognising the 'real sense of caring'. Children enjoy their time in the unit because they are provided with an interesting range of activities that capture their interests well. Teaching is good. Staff are very effective at providing personal support for children and also at moving their learning on. They engage children in lively conversation and model language well. A strong focus on linking sounds and letters and good opportunities for writing ensure that children make good progress in developing their communication and literacy skills. Children play very well together. They have high levels of confidence combined with good manners and are sensitive to the feelings of others reflecting the good progress they have made in their personal and social development. Good leadership and management have ensured that the unit has developed well and that children's progress is carefully monitored and recorded. There has been significant improvement to the outdoor provision. This area is now used particularly well and the exciting activities provided are greatly enjoyed by children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in mathematics throughout Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation carried out by senior and middle leaders especially the use of data to track the progress of individual and groups of pupils, to hold teachers to account and to inform self-evaluation.
- Improve pupils' awareness of how well they are progressing and how to improve their work through better use of learning targets.

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 usually start Year 1 with skills that are similar to the average and by the end of Key Stage 1 reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Achievement in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. In 2008, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 dipped and were below average overall, although they were average in English and well below average in mathematics. Until recently, progress in mathematics was inadequate but pupils are now starting to make up lost ground particularly in upper Key Stage 2. Standards in mathematics are now much closer to the national average but there are still too few pupils working at the higher levels. Achievement is satisfactory in Key Stage 2, although pupils still make slower progress in mathematics than in English and progress in reading is often good. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and those who learn more slowly than others is better when they are directly supported. It is often slower in mathematics, however, than in other subjects. The very small number of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English quickly gain confidence and make the same progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Strong spiritual, moral and social development underpins pupils' good behaviour. They have developed a very clear sense of right and wrong. Good manners, respect and correct behaviour are high on the agenda of all staff and are fully reflected in the way pupils behave in class and around school. Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school and say that bullying is extremely rare and that everyone gets on very well together. Activities such as theatre visits ensure that pupils are well aware of their own culture; however, they have few opportunities to directly experience other cultures. Pupils work hard in lessons, especially when they have the opportunity to work independently, although their concentration occasionally lapses when they are required to sit and listen to the teacher for a relatively long time. Attendance rates are broadly average and have recently improved. Pupils are embracing healthy lifestyles and are particularly enthusiastic about exercise. Secure basic skills, including improved mathematical skills, together with regular attendance and positive attitudes mean that pupils are adequately prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Teachers are clear about what pupils are expected to learn and a good range of activities in lessons keeps pupils interested and involved. Interactive whiteboards are used well to support learning. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good and help pupils to gain confidence. Sometimes teachers' style of questioning is not probing enough and pupils are not challenged to develop their thinking skills. The match of work to pupils' abilities is improving especially in mathematics. However, there are still some occasions when pupils of different ages and abilities are set the same work so the more able do not make as much progress as they could. Although the learning support assistants are few in number, they do some sterling work supporting those with learning difficulties and others who may be finding aspects of their school work difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The provision for basic skills has improved. There are good opportunities for pupils to write at length and this is helping to improve the quality of pupils' writing. The mathematics curriculum has been strengthened by an increased focus on mental mathematics sessions and pupils report that they greatly enjoy the challenge of the sessions. Teachers are ensuring that pupils learn a full range of mathematical skills not just calculation. Pupils report that they have regular access to information and communication technology. The school is starting to make better links between subjects to make the curriculum more relevant and interesting but knows it still has some way to go. There is appropriate provision for those who find learning difficult and good quality additional opportunities for the gifted and talented. The good range of clubs and visits, including a residential visit enhances pupils' enjoyment of school and contributes to their good social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good quality pastoral care is reflected in pupils' good personal development but weaknesses in guidance slows pupils' academic progress. The school provides a warm, compassionate environment; consequently, pupils are very happy in school and feel safe and secure. Safeguarding meets current government requirements. A strong focus on the importance of attendance has led to improvements in attendance rates. Procedures to ensure the needs of vulnerable pupils are met are secure and the school works well with external agencies to make certain that these pupils are properly supported. The marking of pupils' work is variable in quality. Sometimes pupils are told very clearly about how to improve their work but this is not consistent. Furthermore, the use of learning targets is limited. As a result, pupils' understanding of the level they are working at and their understanding of how to get to the next level is restricted.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Satisfactory leadership and management have steered the school through a difficult time when the number of pupils on roll was falling and financial cut backs had to be made. The school is now becoming more popular and more children are expected to join the Early Years Foundation Stage in September. Nevertheless, financial constraints continue to affect the school and this is particularly evident in the quantity of extra support that can be offered to those pupils who find learning difficult. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has good links with the local community especially the church and Catholic community but opportunities for pupils to have first-hand experience of children from different backgrounds are limited. Although the school has a plentiful supply of information about standards and achievement, it is not used effectively by senior leaders and middle managers to check the progress of individual pupils and groups, including those with learning difficulties. Data is not used effectively to inform the schools' view of itself resulting in some of the school's judgements about the impact of its work being too high. Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and learning but their judgements are not always fully informed by the amount of progress the pupils actually make. Despite these shortcomings, the school has identified mathematics as a weakness and secured significant improvement to pupils' progress in the subject. Governors are not complacent and have a good awareness of where the school needs to improve. Although they are not reluctant to challenge, they are not always able to effect change quickly enough.

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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?	2
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?	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?	3
The standards ¹ 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

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	1
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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**

Thank you for being so polite and welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you. We were very impressed with your good behaviour both in and out of lessons. You have lots of interesting things to do at school and that is why you enjoy school so much.

At the moment your school is providing you with a satisfactory education but there are lots of good things to celebrate like the way you grow into such sensible hard working young people. The people who run your school do a satisfactory job. They make sure your school is a very happy place where you feel well cared for and very safe.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. However, overall you make satisfactory progress and usually reach standards similar to children in other schools. Your progress in mathematics has improved but we have asked your teachers to make sure you do even better, including those of you who find learning hard. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. You told us that you particularly like the mental mathematics sessions. We have also asked your teachers to make better use of learning targets so you know exactly how well you are doing and precisely how to improve your work. The school has lots of information about the progress you make and I have asked your teachers to make sure they make the best use of that information.

Thank you again for being such good company. I wish you well for the future.