

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Castleford

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108261
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	324735
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Joe Peacock

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	4–11
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	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Sean Durcan
Headteacher	Mr Kieron Flood
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pontefract Road Castleford West Yorkshire WF10 4JB
Telephone number	01977 723060

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves a diverse community in the centre of a former mining town which still has pockets of high unemployment. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic families has increased to 11 per cent and about half of these need support to learn English. There is provision for Early Years Foundation Stage with children taught in a Reception class. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has gained a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools Award.

Extended provision is available for pupils after school. That provision was inspected separately, at the same time as the school inspection, and receives a separate written report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The journey of the school since the previous inspection is an impressive one of development and improvement. This is a good school with many outstanding features. The school's motto of 'Learning to love and loving to learn' perfectly reflects what the staff have succeeded in giving pupils. It is rare to find pupils who love their school and its teachers so much. 'The headteacher is the face of St Joseph's' according to parents, 'ever present, passionate about "his" school and tireless in his efforts to raise standards and quality'. If the headteacher is the face, the pupils are the smile!

Pupils' personal development is outstanding in this happy school. Attendance is above average and reflects the strong community spirit and pupils' enjoyment. Excellent relationships with staff and between pupils are the key. In the extremely positive response to the inspection questionnaire, parents clearly appreciate all the school is doing for their children. Like their children, they appreciate the genuine interest, care and concern that the school shows for them as individuals. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are well prepared for their next stage of their education, gaining valuable skills from the outstanding curriculum on offer.

Children enter Reception with skills that are generally below those typically expected. They achieve well because of the very favourable adult-to-child ratio and good quality of provision for them in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The high expectations of staff, and pupils' excellent attitudes towards their learning ensure that most continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and attain broadly average standards. However, not enough of the more able pupils attain above average standards in reading and writing. By Year 6 overall standards are above average in English and mathematics and well above in science. Detailed monitoring shows that pupils achieve well by Year 6.

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. The school is fortunate to have a very stable staff with a wide range of experience who are just as passionate as their headteacher about working at St Joseph's. Recently two new teachers have added their enthusiasm and skills to ensure that pupils are provided with an outstanding curriculum which fires their imagination and gives them lots to get excited about.

Teachers are supported well in lessons by skilled and well-trained teaching assistants. All have high expectations of pupils, which are usually met. Those learning English as an additional language are effectively supported by all staff, some with specialist training, enabling them to be fully included in lessons and to make good progress. Teachers assess pupils' progress in depth and pupils are also accurately assessing their own work. This is helping to ensure that standards rise. The care, guidance and support for every pupil are all first class. Safeguarding requirements are met. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. The school's excellent links with outside agencies ensure that individual needs, such as of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are met. As a result, most make good progress and some do even better.

Overall, leadership and management are good. All key staff have clear roles and responsibilities and set challenging targets to raise standards. Outstanding features include community cohesion and equality of opportunity for all pupils. Governors were praised for being far sighted in the previous report and their commitment and professionalism has not wavered. Governance is

outstanding. The headteacher and staff's devotion to the school ensure that it has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, enabling all to achieve well. They join the Reception class from a wide range of pre-school providers, with skills that are below those of children nationally, particularly in communication, language and literacy, and some mathematics skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage team is well led. They have put in place an effective programme, including a focus on phonics, writing and increased opportunities for mathematics calculations, to address these needs. There is a good balance of outdoor and indoor activities and children are able to choose sensibly from the many alternatives on offer. Children grow in self-esteem and enjoy their learning, cooperate with each other and have fun together. A strong focus on the development of their independence supports their personal development, which is outstanding. Relationships with staff are excellent, and children talk with confidence about their ideas. For example two children, one recently arrived in this country, had devised their own game with a large cardboard tube in the playground, and agreed their own rules. The Early Years Foundation Stage staff are skilled in assessing each individual child, and are in the early stages of devising individual profiles. Details are used carefully to match work to children's needs and abilities. The welfare of children is paramount, and great care is taken to ensure that they are nurtured at all times. By the time the children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, most of their skills are broadly in line with those of children nationally, though they are still a little behind in some communication and mathematics skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards for the more able pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 in reading and writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from their starting points due to the consistently good quality of teaching and their excellent attitude to learning. The overall trend is one of steadily improving standards. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average with pupils making good progress due to initiatives such as Reading Recovery and Big Write. However, few of the more able pupils achieve above average standards in reading and writing. Pupils' good progress continues in Key Stage 2 with those who speak English as an additional language doing particularly well because of the close support they receive in lessons from a specially trained teaching assistant. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. The high standards in science are the result of improved teaching skills which provide pupils with exciting hands-on investigations, such as identifying and measuring animal bones. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making increasingly good progress by Year 6, largely due to the wide range of effective intervention strategies which are designed to support their learning and boost their confidence and self-esteem. Standards in art and design are outstanding throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are extremely positive about their school. One parent reflected a typical view in the comment, 'My son skips to breakfast club and is full of stories about what he has been doing.' Pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons and their enthusiasm for learning is clear. Relationships with staff are extremely positive and, because they feel valued, pupils grow in confidence and self-assurance. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent, both in classrooms and on the playgrounds. Pupils know how to keep safe and are exceptionally polite and friendly towards one another. All are keen to help others, 'always open doors with a smile', as commented by one grandparent, and older pupils have recently trained as 'Peer Pals' to support their classmates. Pupils know about leading a healthy lifestyle and they understand about making healthy choices. Attendance is above national levels, and reflects their enjoyment of school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. This is fostered through effective assemblies and lessons where personal and social issues are discussed in depth. Older pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential retreat, which provides time for reflection. The school celebrates its cultural diversity through a range of activities, including studying different religions and the cultures and beliefs of other countries, as well as their own.

The school council is proactive, and is responsible for carrying out a wide range of fundraising activities, some of which enable the school to purchase new outdoor play equipment. The eco warriors' are leading the school in ensuring that resources are conserved. Pupils are well prepared for their move to secondary school and are confident about their future because of their positive experiences at St Joseph's.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good, ensuring that pupils learn well. Teachers establish high standards of behaviour and create an effective learning environment in which pupils thrive. Clear expectations are set and the good relationships with staff give pupils confidence to contribute in lessons. In all classes, teachers place a very strong emphasis on developing basic skills of speaking and listening, and regular opportunities are provided for pupils to work with partners or in small groups. In Years 1 and 2, teachers are beginning to place more emphasis on improving reading and writing skills with some success. All teachers are skilful in questioning pupils, maintaining a brisk pace and planning challenging tasks. Work is always carefully planned and matched to the different abilities of pupils. Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution, ensuring that pupils achieve well by effectively supporting individuals, groups, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In one lesson where teaching and learning was outstanding it was because pupils were more actively involved in their own learning. They effectively used the interactive whiteboard, discussed a poem with their partners and prepared and took part in an entertaining hotseating role-play. When marking work, teachers' comments celebrate pupils' successes and give clear guidance on how completed work can be further improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is rich and varied and has been carefully designed to motivate and stimulate pupils. Meticulous planning ensures that the needs and interests of pupils are met, and subjects are closely linked, to provide a themed approach. The school ensures that computers and new technology are used well to support the curriculum. Pupils are currently establishing video conferencing links with their partner school in Kenya.

There is a strong emphasis on promoting art and design skills, and music. Pupils produce some excellent artwork, such as pencil sketches of the work of sculptor Henry Moore who was born in Castleford. Every Year 3 pupil learns to play the violin, and many choose to extend their musical talents in further years.

Pupils make regular visits to places of interest in the local community, and these provide a rich stimulus for much of the work they do. Very strong links with the Friends of the Valley Gardens Group and the local Heritage Centre, for example, ensure that pupils develop an excellent understanding of their local community.

Visitors to the school include a Spanish teacher and musicians, drama companies and sports coaches. Together with a massive range of extra-curricular activities, they add further breadth to the exciting curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral support is excellent and staff are fully committed to promoting the well-being of pupils. Procedures to promote child protection, the safe recruitment of staff, health and safety, and to reduce risk, are all in place. Highly effective behaviour and anti-bullying policies ensure that behaviour is outstanding and any challenging behaviour is dealt with quickly and efficiently. Vulnerable pupils, those who speak English as an additional language and pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported by a skilled team of teaching assistants and, as a result of this, all enjoy school and achieve well. An overwhelming majority of parents are very supportive of the school. 'A remarkable school,' and, 'This wonderful school beats them all' are typical comments. The school has extensive procedures for ensuring the welfare of all pupils and for consulting with parents. Strong partnerships and good links with external agencies ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need for pupils to attend school happily. Exceptional arrangements are in place to track the progress of pupils and the information gained is used extremely well to set new more demanding targets. These are reviewed regularly by class teachers so that pupils are aware of how well they have done and how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Effective leadership and management are largely responsible for the school's sustained improvement. The highly respected headteacher is ably supported by a deputy who complements his skills well and a very stable staff who clearly enjoy working at the school. Their combined expertise is successfully moving the school forward, making it fully inclusive and ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils. The school plans well and provides an exciting range of

learning opportunities that motivate and challenge pupils. However, the effectiveness of their actions is not yet impacting sufficiently on the more able pupils at the end of Key Stage 1. Resources are used effectively and subject leaders exercise a high level of responsibility for the development of their subjects. The impact of new initiatives is kept under constant review. This information provides the basis for a detailed and relevant school improvement plan and the continuous development and improvement of staff skills through training. This, combined with the impressive improvement since the last inspection, means that the capacity to go on improving is outstanding.

The school is an integral and important centre of the community and, consequently, community cohesion is outstanding. Pupils have a highly developed awareness and understanding of the cultural diversity around them and opportunities for pupils to explore the wider global communities are equally as strong.

The governors have an excellent range of relevant professional skills. All are well informed and deeply committed to the development of the school, which some of them attended as children. They fulfil their role exceptionally well, questioning, challenging and monitoring the school's performance.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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?	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?	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	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	2
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**

Thank you for being so friendly and polite to me and my colleague when we were with you. During the inspection of your school, you helped us to find out all we needed to know about how well you work and learn. Please thank all your mums, dads and carers for completing the questionnaire. We had a really good response and it was good to see how involved they are and how pleased they all are with your school. It comes over as a really special community where there is lots of love and care.

Your school is a good school with so many excellent things happening there that I think a list is the best way to tell you what impressed us most.

- In Reception, the way children are looked after and work so well together are both outstanding. No wonder they make such good progress.
- You told us about your super circle of friends and how much you love coming to school. We can see why you are so happy.
- We think your behaviour is brilliant!
- In class, you really concentrated and worked hard to finish all the interesting and challenging work. I especially enjoyed watching Year 4 measure animal bones that Ricky had found in his garden. It is easy to see why you achieve well above average standards in science.
- Your artwork is amazing – this was mentioned last time the school was inspected, and it's great to see that it's just as good now.
- It was a pleasure to meet your hard-working headteacher and all the staff who take such excellent care of you. They are doing a good job, making school an exciting, fun place for you all.
- I believe some of your governors came to your school as pupils many, many, many years ago. They are doing an excellent job now helping staff to keep making your school even better.

I have asked your teachers in Reception and Years 1 and 2 to do all they can to make sure more of you reach higher standards in reading and writing. You can help by reading as much as you can and looking for the 'wow' words such as 'surreptitiously', 'menacing' and 'dumbfounded' that Year 6 were so good at using in their writing.