

St Joseph The Worker Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115183
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326144
Inspection date	15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Florence Olajide

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)	190
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	12
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Bernadette Rossiter
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Highview Crescent Hutton Essex CM13 1BJ
Telephone number	01277 227282
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of school improvement initiatives in raising pupils', especially boys', attainment in writing; how well information and communication technology (ICT) is being used to promote effective teaching and learning, and pupils' achievement in the subject. They also explored the effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and how well the school is helping pupils to learn and develop in this phase. Evidence was gathered from discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, governors and pupils. In addition, inspectors observed parts of lessons and a school assembly, and scrutinised a range of school information including details of the standards and progress achieved by pupils, the school's self-evaluation and parent questionnaires.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves pupils who live mainly in the Parish of Hutton and Shenfield near Brentwood. Pupils come from a mix of owner occupied homes and housing association dwellings. About three quarters of the pupils are from White British backgrounds, while others represent a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak a first language other than English has grown over the last three years and now represents about a tenth of the pupils. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. However, the school has a slightly higher than average proportion with a statement of special educational needs. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school makes provision for the EYFS from the age of four and pupils enter the school with standards that are generally typical for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school and parents are right in their view that it provides pupils with an excellent start to their education and prepares them well for their future lives as adults. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and she is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, other leaders and governors. Together, they have led significant improvements, notably to the quality of teaching and learning, and the curriculum since the last inspection. These in turn, have led to higher standards and achievement.

Pupils greatly enjoy the varied and exciting curriculum on offer and their attendance is good. Several curriculum awards including the Healthy Schools, Active Mark and the Sustainable Learning awards reflect the enhancements made. A significant strength is the very effective use made of the outdoor environment, and of visits, to ensure that pupils have solid experiences from which their learning is developed. This helps to make their learning relevant and purposeful. The extensive range of enrichment activities has been increased to feature lunchtime clubs and French is now taught in Years 3 to 6.

The high quality teaching ensures that activities are suitably matched to each pupil's needs. Teaching assistants support learners very well in and out of lessons. ICT is used effectively to illustrate teaching points and support learning. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have personal targets in literacy and numeracy and know what they are aiming for. They are assessed and their progress monitored regularly to ensure that they stay on track to achieve the high expectations the school sets for them. They are also involved in assessing their own learning and thorough feedback from staff ensures that pupils and their parents' know what they need to do to improve. As a result of the excellent teaching and exciting curriculum, pupils are highly motivated to learn. They work very hard and their behaviour is impeccable. Consequently, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those new to learning English, make excellent progress from their starting points and achieve exceptional standards.

A recent push on developing thinking skills, the use of drama, combined with the exciting use of technology such as 'podcasting' is having a significant impact on improving standards in writing. While girls continue to attain higher standards than boys do, curriculum improvements are helping boys to make faster progress, thereby reducing the gap between them and girls, particularly in Years 4 to 6. The school is now focussing its attention on achieving the same impact lower down the school.

The school's Christian ethos powerfully underpins the very caring and happy atmosphere that permeates the school and which parents greatly appreciate. One parent explained, 'the school instils a sense of community which allows my daughter to feel loved, cared for and proud of her place in the school'. Staff show exceptional care towards pupils and their families. In turn, pupils model this towards each other and this promotes a safe and secure environment in which they all flourish emotionally and academically. Consequently, pupils' personal development and well-being including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remain outstanding. Pupils display very high levels of maturity when helping and supporting each other. As avidly described by one pupil, when help is needed, 'St Joseph's workers come to the rescue!' Older pupils act as mentors to new pupils in the Reception year. They take this role very seriously and their work includes reassuring parents, in writing, that their children will be

well looked after. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and demonstrate this, for example in the meal choices they make daily.

Pupils make a superb contribution to the school and wider community through various other duties. The school council holds regular meetings with the chair of governors and with local councillors. This gives them a real opportunity to influence decision making not only in the school but within the local community as well. Pupils are therefore rightly proud of their contribution to society. Pupils develop good ICT skills. As they 'formally' apply for the different roles and responsibilities within the school, they are coached and helped to write their own curriculum vitae and to prepare for 'job interviews'. These advanced skills together with pupils' excellent numeracy and literacy skills ensure that they are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning and for the world of work.

The school works closely and effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils make a smooth and happy transition into the school and to secondary school. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and those who are vulnerable is very good, hence the high standards achieved. There are effective procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe and for preventing and dealing with bullying. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff, and procedures for safeguarding pupils fully meet current requirements.

Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are rigorous and effective in promoting very high standards and achievement. Staff use assessment information very effectively to identify and support pupils who are at risk of underachieving. The school meets the targets it sets and revises these regularly to ensure they are suitably challenging. The school has achieved Investors in People status. Professional development and performance management procedures are used effectively to promote improvement. School administration staff support leaders and governors very effectively by ensuring financial and resource management are efficient. This has enabled the school to save up for the significant building works, which have been completed recently. Governors play a full role in the life of the school. They provide leaders with very good support, work closely with staff and pupils and have effective systems for holding the school to account.

Leaders ensure that the school promotes community cohesion by fostering very positive relationships with outside agencies and the wider community. For example, pupils are encouraged to be sensitive to the needs of the school's closest neighbours by inviting them into the school to discuss the impact of the school's building programme on the immediate vicinity of the school. Much work is done to develop in pupils a respect for their own and other cultures. Pupils still talk about the last international day where they learnt about different countries and communities. Pupils learn about other forms of diversity through the close links the school maintains with a local special school and a home for the elderly. They also organise and host various events throughout the year to support British and international charities. Parents note the significant and often practical support that all staff show towards them especially in difficult circumstances.

The school has made good progress in improving the specific issues raised in the last inspection. It has raised pupils' achievement from good to outstanding and maintained excellent provision in other aspects of its work. It therefore demonstrates excellent capacity to improve further and move the school to the next stage of its development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. They settle into routines quickly, play happily together, learn to share and make choices. Their social skills are developed effectively through a wide range of exciting and purposeful play activities. As a result, they make good progress and achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development.

There is a suitable mix of adult-led tasks and activities children choose for themselves. The teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is rooted in practical tasks that appeal to children. All adults use every opportunity to encourage speaking and listening so this aspect of language develops well. The school has begun to implement the revised EYFS curriculum and practitioners make very effective use of the outdoor learning environment to make learning meaningful. However, opportunities within the classroom to explore learning through all the senses are not as good as those provided outside. Nonetheless, the good and sometimes exceptional teaching results in children being enthusiastic about learning. Consequently, they grow in confidence and independence, and make good progress so that by the time they leave the Reception year most reach the expected learning goals for their age.

The provision is well led and managed. Adults are beginning to assess and monitor children's progress more carefully so that all, including those who need extra help, make good progress in their learning. There is excellent teamwork amongst all adults and clear direction from the EYFS leader. Exceptional care is taken of the children making sure they are safe at all times. Close links with the pre-school playgroup and parents benefit children's learning and these are currently being developed to further enhance relationships.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils in the Reception class with a more stimulating and vibrant indoor learning environment that appeals to all their senses and encourages exploration.

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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

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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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	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	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**

16 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph The Worker Catholic Primary School, Hutton, CM13 1BJ

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us when we visited your school recently. We greatly enjoyed meeting and talking to you and this letter is to tell you what we found out. Your school is outstanding. We were impressed by so many things that we cannot name them all, but here are a few.

- You, the staff, governors and your parents work very hard to make your school a special place where everyone cares for each other and you all feel safe and happy.
- You all work very hard and because the adults care for you very well and the teaching is excellent, you do extremely well in your work.
- The school provides you with many exciting activities, clubs, events like the 'international day' and visits, which you told us you enjoy very much.
- We were particularly impressed by the work done by the school council and St Joseph's Workers who make sure that your views are shared with the adults, and who help in and outside the school.

While your school is outstanding, there is still one thing that we think could help it to be even better. We have therefore asked the adults to:

- provide pupils in the Reception class with a more exciting classroom and activities to help them to learn better by using all their senses.

Your parents told us that they appreciate the work that the school does to prepare you for when you are grown up and we know that you do too. We hope that you will continue to do your best and we are positive that St Joseph The Worker would be proud of you all.

Florence Olajide

Lead inspector