

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116911
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	326485
Inspection date	12 January 2009
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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)	105
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	Richard Simmonds
Headteacher	Bernadette Davies
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Avenue Walford Road Ross-on-Wye HR9 5AW
Telephone number	01989 564655
Fax number	01989 565841

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves a wide area around Ross-on-Wye and Ledbury. The number on roll has fallen significantly since the school was last inspected. Around one in ten pupils left immediately following the announcement of a proposed merger with another school after a county wide review of education, although the merger never came about. Around half of the pupils are Catholic. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Above average proportions come from a minority ethnic background and speak English as an additional language, although almost all pupils are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. However, the proportion varies from one year group to another, from around two in five pupils to none at all. Almost no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A new headteacher was appointed in May 2008 and new senior teachers were appointed in July 2008. A new chair of governors, and a number of other new governors, were appointed in November 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Joseph's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Children usually join and leave the school with standards that are broadly average, having made steady progress as they move through the school. Their satisfactory achievement is a result of the satisfactory teaching and curriculum they receive. However, there are signs of improvement. Teaching is now good in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), so children now make good progress and are leaving Reception with standards that are above average. Progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 is slower than that in English and science, because tasks are not matched well enough to the needs of individual pupils. The tasks are set at three different levels of difficulty, but all pupils must complete the easiest ones before moving on to tasks that they find suitably challenging. The improvement in their basic skills, together with a satisfactory range of activities to promote their economic understanding, ensures that they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school places great emphasis on teaching pupils the difference between right and wrong, and how to live a healthy, safe and spiritually fulfilled life. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils get on well with one another and their teachers. They behave well around the school and at break times, but in lessons behaviour is only satisfactory. Pupils become inattentive and fidgety when the pace of learning is slow, which is often the case at the start of lessons when they spend too long on the carpet listening to the teacher and not actively involved.

The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are satisfactory. Pastoral care is good, and the school is very effective in supporting vulnerable pupils such as those who are new to the country. The school is very quick to seek expert advice for pupils who may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so their needs are now diagnosed at the earliest opportunity. Academic guidance is satisfactory. New systems are providing an accurate picture of pupils' progress, but the information gained is not yet being used by all staff to set targets for all pupils or to plan a curriculum that is suitably challenging for each individual. This has been identified as an area for improvement in the school's development plan.

Leadership and management, including that of the governors, are satisfactory. Parents are very supportive of the school, and in particular the changes made by the new headteacher. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Many new initiatives have been introduced, and the headteacher had already identified the areas for improvement noted in this report, which is evidence of an accurate analysis of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. Checks on teaching, which are currently carried out mainly by the headteacher, identify many strengths. However, they do not focus sufficiently on what teachers need to do to help pupils learn more effectively. The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory as many of the new initiatives are yet too new to show significant impact on standards and achievement. However, some areas, such as improved communication with parents, are already proving effective.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with skills which reflect those typically seen for their age. They achieve equally well in all areas of learning so they start Year 1 with standards that are good for their age in terms of both their academic and personal development. This good achievement is a

significant improvement over the last inspection. It has been brought about by good leadership and management that have successfully focused on the accurate assessment of children's needs and the best ways to support them in their learning. Information about children's progress is used well to plan lessons for individual children. Two teachers share responsibility for the class and are supported by a teaching assistant. Each makes careful notes of what children can do, and then activities are planned to extend their learning. The staff meet very frequently to discuss the children, so all have a good understanding of any welfare concerns that may be arising. The activities are also planned jointly, which makes good use of the staff's combined expertise. Children settle very quickly into school and engage productively in the range of activities provided. There is generally a good mix of activities led by the teacher and those initiated by the children themselves, although children do not have free access to an outside area and even when access is available they can be reluctant to use it. Plans have already been drawn up to improve the outside area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace of learning and improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons by ensuring pupils are more quickly involved in activities.
- Improve progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 by providing pupils with tasks that are tailored to their individual ability levels, and do not repeat work they have done previously.
- Involve more staff in carrying out checks on teaching and ensure that such checks have a sharper focus on learning, to enable teachers to be given clear guidance on how pupils' progress can be improved.

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 join and leave the school with standards that are broadly average. The pupils who left Year 6 in 2008, however, did so with standards that were below average, because almost two in every five pupils had a learning difficulty and/or disability. Nevertheless, these below average standards still represented satisfactory achievement. Most groups of pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, but the school is particularly successful with individuals who join from other countries and are at an early stage of learning English. Such pupils make good progress. Progress is satisfactory in English, mathematics and science, although fewer pupils make the expected two levels of progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 than is the case in English and science. However, there are signs of improvement. A decline in standards at the end of Year 2 has been halted, and progress in the EYFS is now good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Parents comment on the good values that the school instils in pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of what is right and wrong and are quick to give their opinions on injustice in the world. Many non-Catholic, as well as Catholic, parents appreciate the strong emphasis on the spiritual development of pupils and the encouragement that the school gives to visit places of worship, regardless of their faith. As a result, pupils have a good sense of community and

respect for others' beliefs and values. Pupils are particularly proud of the work they do to support charities and help others who are less fortunate than themselves. The school council has made a real difference in the school by drawing up rules for better and safer behaviour in the playground. The number of exclusions was high, but this has now reduced considerably. Pupils generally enjoy coming to school, and their attendance is satisfactory. They enjoy the extra clubs and activities available to them. When they are not active in lessons their concentration wanders. Younger pupils may disturb others in such situations, while older pupils start to fidget with whatever comes to hand, such as shoes or water bottles. This often occurs during the first 30 minutes of a lesson, as pupils spend too long listening rather than doing things.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils throughout the school get on well with their teachers and are quick to respond to questions. Lessons are often enlivened by moments of humour or drama, such as slowly revealing the awful contents of the 'staffroom refrigerator' when teaching pupils how to separate solids from liquids. Work is planned at three different levels: what pupils must be able to do by the end of the lesson, what they should be able to do and what they could do. In mathematics in Years 3 to 6, this approach is applied too rigidly, so all pupils have to do the 'must' tasks, when many of them could start at the 'should' or 'could' level. Marking is good. It provides pupils with good feedback on what they have done and how to improve. It seeks pupils' views on the tasks, and they are quick to point out when they have found the work too easy, such as in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The main strength of the curriculum is the way it teaches pupils how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles. The benefit is observed in pupils' good understanding of how to stay safe, both in and out of school, and their good attitudes to healthy eating. Almost all pupils choose, and eat, a balanced meal at lunchtimes and parents support the school's efforts by ensuring that packed lunches are equally as healthy. Pupils also take advantage of the good range of extra activities, such as the sports clubs, to keep fit. The academic curriculum is satisfactory. It is planned to take account of different ability groups, but not always sufficiently well enough to cater for the wide range of individual ages and abilities in a class. This is not the case in the EYFS, where planning is based on meeting each individual's needs, so progress is better.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. Health and safety, and child protection, procedures meet requirements and the school is updating the staff handbook to provide clearer guidance for temporary staff. Staff know the pupils well and are quick to respond to any concerns. This is especially the case with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school now uses expert help to identify issues at an early stage and to ensure that targets for each individual's improvement are as precise as possible. Children settle quickly into the EYFS, because of the good support they receive. Pupils newly arrived in the country receive intensive support from outside agencies,

in their own language, to ensure they settle quickly and make good progress. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The headteacher now has a clear picture of the progress being made by individuals across the school. However, not all pupils yet have individual targets in English and mathematics, so some are not clear about what they are aiming for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has evaluated the needs of the local community and acted on the findings to improve the quality of education offered. Parents are now very pleased with what the school provides and have high hopes for its future. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that all pupils can succeed equally, and works hard to help and support individuals from different ethnic backgrounds or faiths. The school also supports parents in improving their children's attendance, which has seen an overall improvement in attendance this year. Such actions, together with good development of pupils' understanding of the part they can play in the national and global communities, ensure the school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Checks on teaching are currently less successful in bringing about improvement. Staff other than the headteacher are not sufficiently involved, and checks focus on what the teacher has done, without taking account of its impact on the pupils' learning. This leaves teachers unsure as to how their teaching could be improved in order to bring about better learning.

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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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
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	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	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**

13 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5AW

Many thanks for all your help when we visited your school. The things you told us helped us to get a clear picture of how you feel about your school and how well you are doing. We found that you are getting a satisfactory education. You do as well as we would expect in your work and you leave school with standards that are similar to most other pupils in the country. You do not do quite as well in mathematics as you do in your other subjects, so we have asked the teachers to let you go straight to the 'should' or 'could' work if you can already do the 'must' work. We were impressed by how well you all get on with one another, and how much you care about other people. You clearly know right from wrong, and put this knowledge into practice every day. You also know a lot about how to eat healthily and how to stay safe. You told us that you like coming to school for all the extra clubs and to meet your friends. You can get a bit bored in lessons sometimes when you have to listen for too long. So we have asked your teachers to get you involved and active as soon as possible. You can help too, by concentrating as hard as you can and not fidgeting around, which might distract others.

You told us that all the grown ups take good care of you and we agree. Those of you who have come from other countries get lots of help and do well in your work. The people who run the school are making sure that it is getting better. Your mums and dads are very pleased with the things that the new headteacher is doing. Some things are already much better. Children in the Reception class, for example, are now learning more quickly than we often see because the teachers there give the children work that is always a bit harder than what they have done before. The people who run the school know what to do to make the school even better, but they could do this even faster if they spot the things in lessons that would help you to learn more quickly.

Best wishes for your futures

David Driscoll

Lead inspector