

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117436
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326609
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Wynford-Jones

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	236
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Ursula Tan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ian Kendal
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	North Road Hertford Hertfordshire SG14 2BY

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 June 2009
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**Telephone number**  
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01992 583148  
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the school's view of the quality of teaching and learning
- whether all groups of pupils achieve equally well
- the impact of leadership and management on the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the school's contribution to community cohesion.

Evidence was gathered from observations of parts of lessons and discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the inspection questionnaire for parents, school documentation and a sample of the pupils' work. 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 in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

St Joseph's is a similar size to most primary schools. It serves the Catholic population of Hertford and the surrounding area. There are a few pupils from other faiths. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. However, the number of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is increasing slightly. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Pupils' attainment on entry varies from year to year but overall is average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is below the national average. The school holds the Healthy School and the Active Sports Mark awards.

The school offers Nursery provision on mornings only basis. Pupils have access to breakfast and after-school clubs. The headteacher was seconded to the school in September 2006 and became the substantive headteacher in September 2007.

The school shares the site with a private pre-school. Provision not managed by the governing body is inspected separately.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

St Joseph's Catholic Primary provides an excellent education and outstanding value for money. The school fully meets its aims of 'striving to create a Christian environment within which we live, learn and work together'. As a result, the pupils' academic achievement and personal development are outstanding.

The school has sustained and improved upon its performance from the time of the last inspection. The relatively recently appointed headteacher has gained the confidence of parents and is providing clear and decisive leadership. Under his committed and enthusiastic leadership and empowering management style he has brought an added degree of rigour in analysing the school's performance and is successfully promoting greater involvement of parents. Parents overwhelmingly endorse the school's work. One wrote: 'We are very lucky to have our children at St Joseph's; a school which continues to go from strength to strength.' These sentiments were echoed by others.

The excellent teamwork by senior leaders, staff and governors ensures the school provides outstanding standards of care, guidance and support within an encouraging and lively learning environment. This is reflected in the pupils' enjoyment of school, their well above average attendance, exemplary behaviour and excellent attitude to work. They make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community through their work as members of the school council and as a result of their training as 'young leaders'. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and have an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise to their well-being. Pupils have a good knowledge of other cultures but it is not as well developed as the other strands of their personal development. Nevertheless, overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They enter Year 1 with standards that are a little above those expected at this age. By the end of Year 2 standards are typically above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Notably, in 2008, they were exceptionally high. This is because there was a greater proportion of higher attaining pupils in the class. Following careful and detailed analysis of assessment information, the school became aware that standards in reading were consistently better than those in writing and mathematics. Consequently staff took positive steps to redress the imbalance. Current data submitted for the Year 2 statutory teacher assessments suggests that the strategies are successful. The difference in overall performance between reading, writing and mathematics is minimal. Standards, although not as high as in 2008, are above the expected levels.

By Year 6, standards are consistently above and often well above average in English, mathematics and science. In 2008, standards were exceptionally high in all three subjects. In mathematics they were noticeably higher than the national average. The outcomes in English were slightly lower than those in mathematics. This is because fewer pupils than expected attained the higher Level 5 in writing. In science, standards fluctuate slightly from year to year. Overall, they are generally just below those in English and mathematics. This can be attributed in the main to the variation in the pupils' ability to undertake scientific investigations. Current standards in English, mathematics and science are not quite as high as in the previous year but are nevertheless well above expectations for the end of Year 6. The school's detailed assessment records, which include teacher assessments and formal testing, show that these pupils have made outstanding progress from the end of Year 2. There are no variations in the performance

of the different groups of pupils. Pupils who find learning difficult are fully included and make outstanding progress from their various starting points. This is because they receive excellent support which is carefully matched to their needs.

Pupils make excellent progress because teaching is outstanding. The lessons are consistently taught to a good or better standard. Teachers are supported very effectively by able teaching assistants. The relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. As a result, the pupils want to please their teachers and do well. Lessons are conducted at a good pace which challenge and inspire the pupils and work is well matched to their needs and abilities. Teachers make very effective use of resources to bring added interest to the lessons. Information and communication technology, including the use of electronic white boards, is used imaginatively and encourages the pupils to become independent learners. Teachers have embraced approaches advocated by the national strategies. They prepare their lessons thoroughly and demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. Very good use is made of individual target setting. Pupils receive excellent academic guidance to enable them to take the next steps in their learning.

The quality of the displays around the school reflects the outstanding curriculum which promotes and encourages pupils' learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a significant number of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to the school. Local volunteers run lunchtime clubs and provide pupils with access to a wider range of activities. The breakfast and after-school clubs are well organised. They are appreciated by the pupils and contribute much to their personal development.

Although the school is high achieving, the senior leadership team is not complacent. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher ensures the governors are well informed and works closely with them to take the school forward. The capacity for further improvement is excellent. Governors are very supportive, but at the same time offer challenge. They set challenging academic targets and undertake their monitoring and evaluating role rigorously. They ensure that health and safety, safeguarding and child protection procedures meet current requirements. They visit the school regularly and following careful reflection offer recommendations for further improvement. Following the introduction of the Early Years Framework in September 2008, changes are being made to the Nursery's admission policy. From September 2009, the school plans to offer a once-a-year intake. A good start has been made to bring a closer working relationship between the Nursery and the Reception class but this good practice is not currently consolidated or sufficiently well developed.

The staff and governors have embraced the promotion of community cohesion. This is reflected in the school's inclusive ethos; new pupils and visitors are made to feel welcome and valued, and pupils demonstrate tolerance and understanding of each other. The governors recognise that pupils' knowledge of other cultures, customs and way of life is not as well developed. Consequently, the school is actively seeking to extend the links with schools in this country and abroad in order to better prepare the pupils for living in today's society. Nevertheless, the academic standards the pupils attain and their excellent social skills prepare them exceedingly well for the next stage of their education.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Effective induction arrangements and excellent relationships with parents ensure that children settle quickly and feel safe. Teaching and learning are good. Children make good progress in the Nursery and in the Reception class. Assessment procedures are thorough. Staff use the

information well to plan work that meets the needs of the children and supports learning. By the end of the Reception class the vast majority of children are working at or slightly above the levels expected for their age. Staff ensure that activities are stimulating and maintain the children's interest both in class and outside. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. Staff place a high priority on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills. Overall, the children's personal development is excellent. They willingly take responsibility, show respect for each other and develop good skills as learners. As a result, the children work and play well together and enjoy school. Effective use is made of the outside area as a natural extension of the classrooms. However, there is scope for this to be further developed particularly for children in the Reception class. The promotion of children's welfare is outstanding. Children have good opportunities to experiment and explore within a safe and supportive environment. They follow routines which develop good hygiene practices and are learning how to stay healthy. Leadership and management are good and reflected in the high aspirations of staff and the good progress made by the children. However, until recently, the Nursery and the Reception classes have not worked together sufficiently closely. A good start has been made but these initiatives have yet to be consolidated.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that the initiatives to promote greater continuity and to accelerate the rate of the children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage are consolidated and extended.

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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?	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?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	2
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**

22 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Hertford, SG14 2BY

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. We were very impressed with your school and judged it to be excellent.

It is an excellent school because you make good progress in the Nursery and in the Reception classes and outstanding progress from the start of Year 1 to the end of Year 6. The standards you reach in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average. You not only make outstanding progress in your academic work but also in your personal development. Overall, your personal development is also excellent. You have an outstanding understanding of healthy living and being safe. We saw and you told us that you really enjoy school. We were very pleased to see that your attendance at school is well above the national average.

Throughout the day your behaviour was exemplary. It would have been so easy for it to have slipped with the excitement of your sports days and the Nursery assembly, but it did not. Well done! The Year 6 pupils did a fantastic job with helping out with the sports. I wonder if it was something to do with the 'young leaders' training you have done. Keep up the good work.

All this has not happened by accident. It is because the school is very well run by Mr Kendal, the governors and the senior staff. They ensure you get the best they can offer and that you are kept safe in school. Your teachers are excellent and always teach really well. They are continually looking to see how they can make things even better, and yes, they have found a way. That is for the Nursery and the Reception classes to work more closely together. The inspectors think they are right and have asked them to make certain that they continue to do this. This will help the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a similar rate of progress as those in the rest of the school.

We wish you all the best for the future. Please remember to carry on working hard.

Best wishes

David Wynford Jones

Lead inspector