

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Northfleet

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118868
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326917
Inspection date	6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	196
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	A Brett
Headteacher	Maureen Jackson
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	Springhead Road Northfleet Gravesend DA11 9QZ
Telephone number	01474 533515

Age group	5–11
Inspection date	6 May 2009
Inspection number	326917

Fax number

01474 333404

Age group	5-11
Inspection date	6 May 2009
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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 provision and pupils' progress in mathematics
- confirmation of the school's stated strength in the quality of its monitoring
- the provision for gifted and talented pupils and recent curriculum development.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, chair of governors and parish priest, various staff and pupils. Parents' questionnaires were analysed and visits made to lessons. Work samples and a range of documents were examined. 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 form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school with one form of entry. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is much higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is over twice the national average, and increasing. The percentage of pupils who experience difficulty learning the basic skills is slightly higher than that found nationally and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals slightly below. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual ones is higher than usually found.

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. It has maintained the 'outstanding' judgement obtained at the previous inspection because pupils continue to reach high standards year-on-year and achieve extremely well. Pupils make excellent progress. Despite a significant number who experience difficulties learning the basic skills, standards in Year 6 are on course to maintain the exceptionally high levels of previous years. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are rightly very proud of it. They talk most enthusiastically about school life. Excellent results are not obtained at the expense of a limiting curriculum because the pupils experience a full range of opportunities in different subjects. Recently they researched bridge designs and built model bridges. Specialist teaching in music, French and religious education supports the excellent curriculum breadth they receive. Pupils have very good opportunities for residential experiences throughout Years 3 to 6 which support their excellent social skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage is developing well under its comparatively new leadership and the children make good progress.

Monitoring of the school's work is very regular and most thorough under the headteacher's excellent leadership. Frequent tracking of pupils' progress ensures that pupils not making sufficient progress are identified quickly and remedial action put in place. The headteacher keeps a close eye on pupils' progress through discussing their targets with them and examining their work books. Lesson observations involve all staff, often with pairs of observers, so that teachers learn this skill effectively. Written reports of lesson observations contain a very good blend of strengths and areas for improvement which ensure that teachers continue to develop their skills to a high standard. Staff's expertise is developed extremely well and this encourages them to take on extra responsibilities. Senior staff take turns to organise the agenda and to chair their meetings, which develops their leadership skills most effectively.

Pupils have highly developed social skills because they are given opportunities which they execute most conscientiously. School ambassadors show visitors round. Older pupils sort out minor disputes and look after younger children at lunchtimes. The school council put forward the pupils' suggestion of a salad bar at lunchtimes, which has proved highly successful. Equally pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural awareness is highly developed. Pupils develop respect for the faiths of others by learning about local Sikh and Jewish communities at first hand. This helps them to understand the importance of treating everyone with the same respect. Pupils support a wide range of charities both at home and abroad. They raise money for some of these through their own efforts and ideas which also support their economic understanding very well. Pupils behave extremely well. Their excellent attitudes to learning mean that they complete a lot of work in lessons. They also record it neatly.

The care, support and guidance the pupils receive are outstanding. As one parent writes, 'The school provides great support for all the children.' Pupils feel very secure and safe and are extremely well supported by staff. As one pupil said, 'It's a happy place. You may have worries at home but these are lifted from your shoulders here. All the teachers help and talk to us.' Relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils are excellent. Church, school and family links are outstanding.

This is a very well ordered, neat and tidy school where pupils' work is valued and displayed to advantage, giving pupils a true sense of pride in their achievements. High quality artwork, such as floral designs in the style of William Morris, show excellent skills for the pupils' ages and add colour and vibrancy to the corridor spaces. Resources are truly valued, cared for and

extremely well organised. They are used very effectively in pupils' learning and support their very good understanding.

Pupils have an excellent awareness of healthy and safe living because the personal, social and health education is so well organised, including visits from health professionals and the police. Pupils understand and practise healthy and safe living. They regularly take part in sport through the wide range of extra-curricular activities. These also provide extremely well for pupils with particular gifts, for example in music, so that they can develop their talents to the full. These are supported by other activities, such as links with other schools, where pupils with similar talents can meet together and further their interests.

Extremely well planned and organised lessons ensure that work is matched very well to pupils' needs so that all are challenged appropriately. Able pupils are really stretched. Able Year 4 pupils made rapid progress and coped very well with fractions and mixed numbers in a mathematics lesson and quickly grasped the concepts. Year 6 pupils tackled a fascinating investigation involving area and perimeter. The task was arranged to challenge different ability groups so that all pupils had to think deeply to find a solution. Written work is varied and often linked across subjects. In a history lesson, Year 6 pupils wrote a diary extract from the viewpoint of a Victorian child. The quality of written work is frequently very high. In a poem linked to a study of birds, a Year 6 pupil wrote: 'Jet black body with outstretched wings, Soaring through the still sky...'

Although results in mathematics have been well above average by the end of Years 2 and 6, traditionally progress in the subject between Years 2 and 6 has not been as rapid as in reading and writing. More effective tracking of progress and a better balance in mathematics lessons between explanation and activity are driving improvements. While parents are able to support their children at home in reading, they do not have the same degree of confidence in helping in mathematics because they are not fully acquainted with the methods that the school uses.

Parents overwhelmingly praise the school. They appreciate the way teachers' own enthusiasm keeps the pupils focused on their learning in this well-disciplined school. Parents also praise the effective management, good communication and the approachable, friendly staff.

Governors take a keen interest in the school. Regular visits ensure that they are well informed about different school matters and enable them to contribute well in meetings and to challenge and question. The school promotes community cohesion extremely well so that pupils are alert to different needs and cultures and have open minds. Pupils, for example, support a project in India and readily welcome new pupils from different backgrounds and those who arrive with little English. The school makes excellent arrangements for such new pupils, including the use of interpreters, and the pupils often make rapid progress in learning English.

This is a school that demonstrates a consistency of outstanding provision and an outstanding capacity to provide for all pupils' needs and for continued development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment on entry is often below that expected for the start of the Reception Year. Speaking and listening and mathematics skills are often weaker aspects. Good teaching enables the children to make good progress and to reach average standards by the end of Reception. There is a good blend of formal and independent activities and the children show good skills in selecting and pursuing activities for themselves. The children's welfare arrangements are

excellent and their personal development is outstanding. Children thoroughly enjoy their learning and are keen to share it with adults. The outdoor space is safe and well managed and is used well to promote some aspects of pupils' learning. However, teachers are not yet exploiting all learning to the full by exploring and listing the full potential of the different activities. The provision is developing well under comparatively new leadership and the staff work well together. The provision is well resourced. Good banks of evidence of the children's progress and records are carefully maintained. The school is keen to make the provision even better and to work with consultancy support to make it outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work more closely with parents to enable them to support their children's mathematical development more effectively.

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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 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	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

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

7 May 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Gravesend DA 11 9QZ

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when we visited your school, for talking to us about the things that you do and sharing your work with us. We really enjoyed our visit. St Joseph's is an outstanding school and we can see why you are so proud of it. You make excellent progress in your work and reach high standards. The staff do a really good job, not only in teaching you so many interesting things and new skills, but also in the excellent care that they provide for you. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. We like the way that the older children look after the younger ones. We were also impressed with the way you think of others and your support for various charities.

You behave extremely well in class and you do a lot of work in lessons. The work in your books is very neat and tidy. You have a very good range of activities to enjoy including many after school. We liked the way that staff display your work so that all can see it. Your art work is of a high standard.

There is just one thing that we are suggesting the school does to improve itself. Your parents do not always understand the methods the teachers use in mathematics. We have asked the school to provide more meetings to help your parents understand these methods so that they can help you with your mathematics at home as easily as they can in reading.

We hope that you will continue to work hard and do your best. Thank you once again for your help and welcome.

Yours faithfully

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector