

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119620
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327088
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Matthews

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)	229
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>	Mr Paul Ryan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Juliet Walling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 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>	Aldrens Lane Lancaster Lancashire LA1 2DU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 65576

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 April 2009
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**Fax number**

01524 60588

**Age group** 3-11

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school with Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children of Nursery and Reception age. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Other ethnic backgrounds are represented in the pupil population, although the number of pupils in each group is very small, as is the number learning English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils has been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average, reflecting a level of local deprivation greater than is typical nationally. The current headteacher was appointed two years ago after a period of considerable staffing instability.

The school has achieved the 'Healthy Schools' award in recognition of its work in promoting healthy lifestyles.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement.

Standards are low and pupils' achievement is inadequate. Since the arrival of the present headteacher, strategies have been put in place to improve pupils' progress. However, they have not been swift and effective enough to improve the achievement of the majority of pupils. Too many pupils of differing abilities are not making the progress of which they are capable. Following a period of significant staffing instability the headteacher has made good use of support from the local authority to strengthen teaching and boost progress in some year groups. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, inconsistencies in quality remain which prevent adequate or better progress in all year groups.

Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Even here, however, teaching is inconsistent in its quality. Strengths in teaching in Years 1 and 2 are reflected in signs of better progress, though the sustained effects of these positive elements remain to be seen in reversing a recent downward trend in standards at the end of Year 2. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 were exceptionally low in the last two years in English, mathematics and science. Intensive support for the current Year 6 pupils has had a positive, if recent, impact on progress, and has partly compensated for some past inconsistencies in the quality of teaching of this age group. Achievement in Years 3 to 5 is inadequate because recent improvements to teaching are inconsistent and not fully embedded. Improvement since the last inspection has been too slow, particularly in addressing issues regarding pupils' progress.

However, systems of good quality for tracking pupils' progress are now in place and the headteacher provides good leadership and a determination to raise achievement. This gives the school satisfactory capacity to improve. There are satisfactory links with other agencies that support pupils' well being, although with only a limited range of organisations. The school is working effectively to further develop its links with parents, most of whom regard the school positively.

The curriculum is satisfactory, though it lacks excitement and challenge. Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular activities at St Joseph's. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and most pupils behave well. Attendance rates have improved recently and are now broadly average. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are satisfactory. The school places a high priority on supporting their personal and emotional needs. Academic guidance is satisfactory. However, staff do not yet make consistently effective use of the new tracking system to tackle underachievement. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. However, the management of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities lacks consistency across the school and not all pupils who require support are efficiently identified and assessed.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Many children start school with levels of skill, knowledge and understanding below those normally found for their age. Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation

Stage. Staff effectively promote children's welfare, providing well for their physical, social and emotional needs. They welcome them warmly and help them to settle quickly by getting to know them well, helping them to feel safe and secure and to grow rapidly in confidence and independence. Children make good progress in their personal development and well-being. They proudly show the stickers that they have received for 'good manners', eat their snacks sensibly and say how fruit 'makes us grow strong'. Children receive satisfactory help to learn and develop. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. It is good in the Nursery, where the outdoor area is used well to promote exploration and progress across areas of learning. The addition of an outdoor area for the Reception children is an improvement since the last inspection. However, it does not reflect the richness and diversity of that in the Nursery, where children 'paint' the fences and explore mark-making opportunities among a wealth of other exciting activities. Children experience an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities and there is good support from teaching assistants in promoting well-being and learning, especially that of letter sounds. The shared leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Good use of external support is strengthening teaching where it is satisfactory.

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

- Raise standards, ensuring all groups of pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory or better progress by clearly identifying and rigorously meeting their learning needs.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the school, by ensuring all teachers' expectations of pupils of differing abilities are sufficiently high, challenging pupils appropriately and developing pupils' independent learning skills.
- Rigorously use information from tracking pupils' progress to identify those making inadequate progress and support them appropriately.
- Ensure that all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported appropriately.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 4**

Achievement is inadequate because too many pupils of different abilities are not making the progress of which they are capable. The school has taken appropriate steps to improve progress, but these strategies have not had an impact on enough pupils throughout the school to raise overall achievement to satisfactory levels. Pupils' progress throughout the school is too susceptible to variations in the quality of teaching. Where teaching is more effective, such as in the current Nursery, Year 1 and Year 2, progress is better. The school's assessment information shows pupils in Years 3 to 5 make inadequate progress because improvements to teaching are not fully embedded. In the last two years, standards have been exceptionally low at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. Following recent intensive support of current Year 6 pupils, the school's data indicate improvement and satisfactory progress in Year 6. However, the progress of the Year 6 pupils over the current year has been inconsistent. Progress from Years 2 to 6 was an issue at the last inspection, and the school acknowledges that improving the quality and consistency of pupils' progress remains a priority.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Behaviour is generally good, and most pupils are friendly and thoughtful, although some older boys can be mildly disruptive. Most pupils enjoy school, although enthusiasm in lessons is not always as good as it might be when teaching does not inspire them. Attendance is broadly average. Pupils report that they feel safe and say that if bullying occurs, staff deal with it effectively. Pupils know about the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. A significant number, however, display tiredness during lessons which reduces their capacity to learn. Healthy snacks provided by the school are popular with the younger children. The school council gives pupils a voice and has been instrumental in recommending improvements to the school. Pupils also have opportunities to take responsibility around the school, for example, in helping younger ones and in helping as monitors in school and fundraising to support educational visits. Pupils have a good knowledge of their local culture and faiths but a limited understanding of the cultural richness and diversity of modern British society. The current weakness in pupils' academic achievement means that they are not prepared as well as they could be for the next stage of their education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, and improving, with strengths in the Nursery and Key Stage 1. Recent strategies to improve teaching include support from the local authority and the introduction of a rigorous tracking system that teachers are beginning to use to plan for pupils of differing abilities. The headteacher minimises the adverse effects of staff absence as much as possible, and teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory, with some strengths emerging. The quality of the teachers' assessment of pupils is improving but information from assessments is not used consistently well in all classes. Consequently, activities planned for pupils do not always meet the needs of individuals and groups, which holds back progress. Whilst pupils are generally well managed and behave well in lessons, thus helping learning, there is a tendency for teachers to dominate and direct pupils too much, most noticeably in Key Stage 2. This reduces the opportunities for pupils to work independently. Pupils have targets for improving their work but the impact of these on raising standards varies between classes. When they are most effective, pupils know how well they have done and how they can improve as individuals. Often, however, the targets are rather general and are not tailored closely enough to individual needs. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the education of pupils with a statement of special educational needs, but the quality of support for children with other learning difficulties varies. Most staff have interactive whiteboards and access to computers but the use of these resources to support teaching and learning lacks consistency between classes.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum meets national requirements but it lacks imagination in the way subjects are planned and is often not relevant to the lives of the pupils. This reduces the impact of the curriculum on pupils' motivation to learn. An appropriate emphasis is placed on literacy and

numeracy, but less so on information and communication technology (ICT). Opportunities for pupils to transfer their basic skills to new and challenging situations are reduced because links between subjects are not fully exploited. Events, such as the Arts week, widen pupils' learning experiences, but these are infrequent. Pupils are enthusiastic about the range of extra-curricular clubs, with sport, guitar and gardening seemingly very popular. Pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is satisfactorily promoted through schemes such as social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL). Opportunities within the curriculum to develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world are not fully developed.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils are well cared for and supported in terms of their personal and emotional development. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are securely in place. The impact of the learning mentor on attendance and behaviour is very good. Effective strategies have significantly reduced incidents of challenging behaviour. Absence has reduced to the extent that targets set for the school have been exceeded. Academic guidance is satisfactory although there are weaknesses. There are good quality systems for tracking the progress of pupils across the school. Their use by staff to tackle underachievement, although improving in effectiveness, is not yet consistent across the school. The quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities lacks consistency across the school. Recent improvements to the way targets are set for pupils who are identified with needs are boosting their progress, but not all pupils who require support are efficiently identified and assessed.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides good leadership and has a clear vision for St Joseph's. She understands the school's strengths and weaknesses and has, with considerable support from the local authority, introduced well-conceived strategies to bring about improvement. Not least of these are a good system for monitoring pupils' progress and support to improve teaching. These provide important building blocks for the future, though not enough has been done to strengthen teaching sufficiently across all classes, and to ensure assessment data is used to accurately match work to pupils' different abilities. Governors discharge their duties satisfactorily and ensure that the school sets suitably challenging targets. They know the school and have been central to the introduction of the strategies for improvement.

Managers at different levels, including subject coordinators, are suitably developing their roles and currently have a satisfactory impact on their areas of responsibility. However, the management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities lacks rigour, and this hampers their progress. Teachers have not been sufficiently involved in identifying these pupils' needs, and in ensuring that provision for them is as good as it could be. The school contributes satisfactorily to community cohesion. There are strong local links, particularly with the local church, though the contribution to community cohesion globally is not as good as it could be. Most aspects of the school's self-evaluation are accurate. However, it is over-generous in its evaluation of pupils' achievement. The headteacher's drive to see initiatives through, supported by governors and staff, means that there is satisfactory capacity to improve and to enable the school to achieve its mission 'to be the best that we can be'.



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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

<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>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

## The quality of provision

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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

30 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster, LA1 2DU

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection of your school. We really enjoyed visiting your lessons, talking to you about your work and sharing lunch with you. We were pleased to find that most of you behave well and that you are friendly and thoughtful towards others. Even the children in Nursery quickly learn the importance of good manners. Through the Early Years Foundation Stage you grow into sensible and responsible pupils. We are pleased that your attendance has improved and that most of you make sure you come to school regularly and on time, so that you can make the most of your lessons. Your headteacher does a good job in managing and leading the school and she has introduced some useful ways to help St Joseph's to improve. Teachers now have the tools to keep a close check on how you are doing, and the quality of teaching is getting better.

Although teaching is satisfactory, it has not been good enough in all classes to make sure that you do as well as you could. Too many of you are making unsatisfactory progress. Some of you who find learning difficult do not get the help you need as quickly as you might, so that your progress is not always as good as possible.

We have asked your headteacher, other staff and governors to focus on certain things to make sure the school improves. These are to:

- Ensure that all of you, especially those who find learning hard, make satisfactory progress or better.
- Improve teaching so that all teachers expect you to do as well as you possibly can, and to give you more chances to use your own ideas and work on your own.
- Use what they know about how well you are learning to spot those of you who could do better, and to help you to do so.
- Watch out for those of you who find learning hard and help you as early and as much as possible.

You can help by making sure that you continue to come to school on time and as often as you can and by working hard. Thank you again for your help.

Yours faithfully ,

David Matthews

Lead inspector