

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Medlar-with-Wesham

## Inspection report

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119629
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327092
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carole Cressey

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	67
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 Denise Richardson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Wright
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2005
<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>	Garstang Road North Medlar-with-Wesham Preston Lancashire PR4 3HA

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2009
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**Age group** 4–11

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This very small school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a Reception Class. The school also has a breakfast club and provides after-school care. Most pupils are from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The number of pupils who receive free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at various stages of the year is above average and in some year groups it is as high as 50%.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has outstanding features in providing for pupils' personal development and well-being and care, guidance and support. The headteacher manages the school with great enthusiasm and drive. At the heart of this school is the belief that when pupils are nurtured and valued in a strong Christian community, they become successful citizens and learners who are able to confidently take their place in the twenty-first century.

This comment from two parents reflected the views of an overwhelming majority of parents and is well placed: 'St Joseph's learning environment has enabled our children to develop academically, socially, morally and spiritually. We feel that all staff are equally committed to ensuring they provide the best education possible.'

Pupils certainly enjoy school. 'This is a cracking school' said one pupil. Excellent behaviour is the norm in this well ordered, warm and friendly community. There is a strong sense of community which contributes to pupils' learning and personal development. This ensures that pupils are developing into tolerant, kind and respectful young citizens who show considerable responsibility for themselves, each other, the global community and the natural world and its resources.

The rich and creative curriculum and good teaching ensure that pupils of all abilities and interests enjoy school and make good progress. As a result, pupils are achieving well, reaching the standards expected of them and often exceeding them. Cohorts are usually small and so comparisons with national data must be treated with caution. In addition, a significant number of pupils arrive at the school at different stages of the school year and often with gaps in their learning. Children enter the Reception class with levels of development which vary from year-to-year but are often lower than is usual for their age. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. They achieve well and reach, and often exceed the expected levels for their ages and abilities in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.

This school buzzes from morning until night. Long before the official start of school, pupils can be seen in classrooms or shared areas hard at work on some challenging task set by their teachers to accelerate their learning. Lessons have a strong ethos of hard work and fun which encourages pupils to do their best. Tasks are challenging and well matched to pupils' abilities. However, at the start of lessons when pupils are all taught as a group, teachers do not always check that all pupils are fully involved and have enough opportunities to contribute.

Assessment and recording systems provide teachers and managers with a detailed picture of what needs to be done to address gaps in pupils' learning and accelerate progress. Pupils know how to improve their work and are very clear about how well they are doing in relation to their challenging targets.

The well planned, creative curriculum, along with the emphasis on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, ensures that pupils are well equipped to be successful adults. The care of pupils is outstanding. Staff are extremely vigilant, identify the needs of each pupil very carefully and provide highly effective support. The school's very welcoming atmosphere, together with the concern for individuals shown by staff, ensures that pupils stay safe and healthy and are valued and properly looked after. This helps them to grow in their self-esteem and confidence.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, staff and governors accurately judge the school's strengths and weaknesses and know what needs to be done to ensure continued improvement. The success of these actions also shows that the school has good potential to make further improvements.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school's own data shows that attainment on entry varies from year-to-year. The current Reception class is very small. Most children started school with skills and knowledge that are generally below those typical for their ages. Leadership and management are good and as a result of good teaching and excellent levels of care and welfare, children enjoy learning and make good progress toward the goals expected for their ages and abilities. Very good emphasis is placed on helping children to learn to be sociable individuals and they quickly learn to be kind and considerate to each other. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. All children are becoming confident in recognising letters and sounds and in counting and naming shapes. The more able children are beginning to use their knowledge to read and write simple sentences and understand simple addition. Outdoor learning is effective in supporting and extending children's spontaneous play. There is a good balance between activities where children discover things for themselves and those where they work with an adult. However, activities children choose for themselves are not always sufficiently challenging and it is not always clear what children are expected to learn from the activities provided. Assessment systems are effective in helping staff to pinpoint each child's progress and identifying the next steps in learning.

Additionally, the provision in the before and after school club is very clearly focused on the learning and development needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

- Ensure that in the Early Years Foundation Stage all activities children choose for themselves are sufficiently challenging and planned clearly and precisely to identify what children are expected to learn
- Ensure that teachers provide enough opportunities for all pupils to be involved and contribute when they are taught in a large group at the start of lessons.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Given the typical picture of children starting school with below average levels of development and leaving with average standards, achievement is good. Assessment data fluctuates because of the big impact on the results of a few pupils within small cohorts, but overall in Key Stage 1, pupils build on their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress from their starting points.

In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to move on at a good pace. All pupils, including the considerable number joining school in Years 3 to 6, make good progress towards the targets set for them. Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 vary, but indicate broadly average standards overall. Recent results have suggested improving standards. For example, unvalidated results for 2008, indicate that all pupils gained the standard expected for their age in English, mathematics and science and a good proportion exceeded them and the current Year 6 group

are on course to do well again this year. As a result of considerable efforts to improve learning for boys, they now maintain rates of progress similar to the girls. Pupils' progress, as measured by the school's assessment data, indicates that it is good across the school. This is supported by the good teaching and quality of provision seen during the inspection.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. These 'sparky', well motivated pupils are exceptionally polite, friendly and well behaved. They respect the school's rules and say rewards such as 'golden time' help them all become better people. They are regular attenders, who enjoy their lessons and value all the help they receive from their teachers to become successful learners. Pupils are learning to be very good citizens. They have an excellent awareness of their responsibilities as members of their school community and show considerable kindness and patience to their classmates with learning difficulties. First hand experiences of other cultures and faiths, including video links with other schools and the learning of three European languages, help pupils to learn to respect people different from themselves. Pupils are eager ecologists and they take very seriously their responsibility in conserving the world's scarce resources. Displays around the school are a testament to the pupils' success in raising considerable amounts of money for charities. The school council is pleased that their ideas are listened to and that they can make a difference to the school. Being healthy and safe in this school means very regular physical education lessons, attending a wide range of sporting after school clubs, becoming proficient cyclists, careful pedestrians, choosing healthy options at lunchtime and walking to school at least once a week. The pupils' excellent attitudes and willingness to learn, coupled with their good achievement for their ability, gives them a very good preparation for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good. All teachers enjoy excellent relationships with pupils which promote positive attitudes to learning. There is a good buzz of excitement because tasks are stimulating, challenging, practical and grasp the interest of pupils. For example, learning how to design a flowchart and write the instructions for boiling a kettle was so much more interesting for the pupils because they used a real kettle. When teaching is especially effective, careful attention is paid to the different ways pupils learn. Individual and group tasks are usually well matched to the needs of different abilities with good levels of challenge. However, there are times, especially at the start of lessons when all the pupils are together, when there are insufficient opportunities for all pupils, particularly those who are less confident, to be fully involved in the learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very effectively by teachers and pupils to add interest to lessons and to make learning less mundane. The rigorous assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are becoming increasingly effective in planning future learning and identifying where pupils need extra support or challenge. High quality displays remind pupils of how to be successful learners. Pupils themselves speak of how valuable these are and the careful marking of their work helps them to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from being in small groups with the support of highly skilled teaching assistants where the use of practical materials, games and ICT help them to learn in ways which are well matched to their learning needs.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A good programme of social and health education provides the pupils with the necessary tools to develop personal safety, care and healthy living. Recent, well-managed and thoughtful innovations ensure that the curriculum is responsive to pupils' needs. Aspects of the curriculum are being organised around the answers to 'big questions'. These provide exciting opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of subjects and ideas, as well as promoting enquiring young minds. Out of school clubs, visits and visitors to school abound, enriching pupils' learning and personal skills. The school offers a wide range of extra sporting and musical activities which add a breadth to pupils' experiences, which they and their parents value. For example, every single pupil in Years 3 and 4 is learning to play the guitar. A Japanese Club, links with Basra, France and MADD (music art dance and drama) weeks provide opportunities for pupils to immerse themselves in the culture of other countries. This makes a major contribution to their personal development. This increasingly vibrant curriculum is becoming highly successful in equipping pupils very well for their future role as responsible citizens and in promoting their economic well-being.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides high levels of care for its pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are in line with statutory requirements. Staff who have particular responsibilities for pastoral care and for pupils with learning difficulties make a major contribution to pupils' well-being. Any pupils at risk are identified early and the school provides very effective support to make sure no-one 'slips through the net'. Staff work very effectively with parents and outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils, ensuring they thrive and make good progress. The school is very highly praised by parents and works very well with them to involve them in their children's work. The school prides itself on being an inclusive community and takes great care to ensure that newcomers quickly settle in happily and feel at home.

The school's childcare provision makes a positive contribution to children's welfare before and after school and meets all requirements. The guidance given to pupils about what they should do to improve is excellent. Targets are clearly written and are in a form which pupils can readily refer to and easily understand.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. School leaders have a clear sense of purpose and determination to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. The headteacher is well supported by a challenging governing body and a strong team of senior teachers.

The school works with a range of partners, including the local authority, the diocese, other schools and sports groups to enrich pupils' learning. The school provides good value for money. School leaders are determined that the school will not be limited by its size and is innovative and flexible in its use of staff and resources. Working within a very limited budget, governors have allocated funds which have ensured that the school, both inside and outside, is well resourced and is fit for education in the twenty-first century. Staffing is very well organised



and very carefully allocated to meet children's needs. The inclusion of national and local initiatives is welcomed as a way to further improve the teaching and learning. The school is keen to acquire any additional funding to benefit itself and has recently been successful in gaining a grant of £2000 to further develop its extended services.

Assessments, test results, planning, the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning are all effectively monitored to evaluate the impact of changes and also to identify if pupils need additional support or challenge. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. Careful thought is given to ensuring that this is a highly inclusive school. The headteacher and governors are very clear about the great value that pupils of all abilities, backgrounds and faiths bring to the school. They value the benefits of links with the community both locally and further afield. The headteacher, staff and governors are determined to continue to raise standards and equip pupils well for the challenges of the future.

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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?	2
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	2

### 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?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

<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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

12 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Medlar-with-Wesham, Lancashire, PR4 3HA

Thank for being so friendly and welcoming when I inspected your school a short while ago. I really enjoyed talking to you. I wonder if you remember that one of you described your school as a 'cracking school'. Well, I am pleased to tell you that I agree with you. It is a good school with some outstanding features. I am also pleased to say that your parents and carers agree. Here are some of the things I especially liked about your school.

- It was so good to see how very well behaved and polite you are. You are especially kind and patient to those of your classmates who need extra help with their learning. I was especially pleased to see how much you enjoy your lessons and how eager you all are to learn new things.
- I could see by the work in your books and displays around the school that you are all progressing so well in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The work you do in other subjects looks very interesting, especially 'The Big Questions'. I expect you are going to find some very interesting answers.
- You work hard in lessons and you know how to improve your work. I especially like the way you keep looking at your targets to check your work.
- I was also very pleased to see that you are becoming very responsible young citizens who are aware of the importance of respecting other people that have different traditions and religions. You are also very welcoming to new children who join your school.
- You know the importance of protecting the environment, eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is so important to staying healthy and happy.

To help you improve even further your school I have asked the school to involve you more in lessons when you are in a large group. I have also asked the school to make activities in Reception more challenging.

I hope you will continue to enjoy school so that you become happy and successful adults.

Yours faithfully

Carole Cressey

Lead inspector