

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Darwen

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119667
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	327103
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Andree Keddle

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)	182
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	Mr Peter Wilkinson
Headteacher	Mrs Anne O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Limes Avenue Darwen Lancashire BB3 2SG
Telephone number	01254 706264

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Inspection number	327103

Fax number

01254 776 896

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average sized school where most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is low. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Children enter the school's Reception class from a variety of early years' settings within the local area. There was a period of leadership instability before the appointment of the current headteacher, with several acting headteachers. The school has achieved the Activemark award.

There is registered childcare on site which is managed independently of the governing body. This was inspected at the same time and is the subject of a separate report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Some aspects of the school's work are good, notably pupils' attendance and their understanding of how to keep themselves safe and live a healthy lifestyle; and the personal development and well-being of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has a caring ethos and there is a strong emphasis on Christian values and, as a result, pupils' spiritual development is good.

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Children enter school in Reception with skills typical of children of their age. By the time they leave in Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average.

Satisfactory achievement of pupils is the result of satisfactory teaching and learning. Variability of practice in teaching, learning and assessment means that not all pupils make the progress they should, particularly the higher attaining pupils. Some teachers do not match learning activities to the abilities of the pupils well enough to challenge them sufficiently. Although work is marked regularly, the quality of marking is variable and some does not inform pupils well enough to enable them to understand how to improve their work. Some pupils are given the opportunity to self-assess their work and learn how to improve it but this is not consistent throughout the school. Senior leaders have identified these variations clearly through data analysis and have put into place effective strategies to reduce these differences.

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. Although suitably broad and balanced, the curriculum does not fully meet the needs of all groups of learners. Music is a strong feature; for example, all pupils in Year 4 have the opportunity to learn to play various instruments through the 'Wider Opportunities Programme.' Brass and keyboard tuition is also available and some pupils are members of a brass band which rehearses at the school.

The school's leadership team uses data analysis very effectively to accurately evaluate the school's performance. The areas where the school needs to improve have been correctly identified and there have been several new initiatives focused on raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress. These have not been in place long enough to impact on pupils' achievement. The school is supported by caring and enthusiastic governors who recognise the need to challenge the school further to increase the pace of improvement. The school has taken steps to improve since the last inspection, such as developments to broaden the curriculum and include more writing in a variety of subjects. The pace and impact of improvements have been limited by the period of instability in leadership before the appointment of the current headteacher. All of these factors mean that the capacity to improve the school further is judged to be satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children join the Reception class with skills comparable to most pupils of that age group. They make satisfactory progress so that, by the time they enter Key Stage 1, all pupils have achieved standards expected for their age. The school is working hard to increase the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the new approach to teaching phonics has been successful in developing children's reading skills. Many children are starting to make good progress and they are applying phonics to their early attempts at reading and writing.

Children are helped to learn and develop in a satisfactory way. Activities are based on practical tasks and they have ample opportunities to work with an adult or to choose to work with a friend or on their own. Children take part in the group activities enthusiastically but are less eager to learn when taught as a class where the teaching does not always match their needs. Staff are good at intervening where children need help and encouragement, and children are happy and enjoy learning. As a result, their personal development is good and children are able to share resources well and stay focused on one task for a considerable amount of time.

Welfare is satisfactory and appropriate procedures to keep children safe are in place. Assessment is improving, although the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator is not fully involved in the analysis of assessment information. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a detailed plan which identifies the correct priorities to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage and the school is receiving support from the local authority. The school has plans to extend the outdoor area to further extend learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all groups of pupils, particularly the more able, make consistently good progress throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that there is a higher proportion which is consistently good or better.
- Ensure the curriculum and teaching for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are more closely matched to the needs of this age range.

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

Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From broadly typical starting points, children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most children reach the standard expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with the national average and have been so for three years. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils reach standards which are broadly average in English, mathematics and science.

Inspection evidence confirms that current pupils are making satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. However, progress varies: it is not equally good in all year groups and subjects, for both boys and girls, or for pupils with different learning needs, such as the higher attaining pupils. The school is implementing strategies to reduce these differences, but these have not been in place for long enough to show evidence of impact on the standards reached by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall as the result of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory with several good features. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. They have a good understanding about keeping safe and healthy. They pay attention to the visitors who advise

them on road safety and health education. Consequently, they know how to look after themselves. Pupils are eager to keep fit as can be seen in their energetic games at playtimes. Their contribution to the community is satisfactory. School councillors represent their classmates well and share their ideas with other members. Year 6 pupils help newcomers to the school by acting as a 'buddy' to help them settle in. Links with the wider community are strong with the church but less well developed with other groups. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, spiritual development is good as a result of the school's strong ethos, based on Christian principles. Prayers are said respectfully and spirituality is developed sensitively through assembly reflection time when pupils consider issues such as human dignity and respect for others. Social and moral development are satisfactory. Pupils are friendly and the majority behave well, particularly in lessons. Nevertheless, a few pupils and parents expressed a concern that behaviour is not always good enough from a minority of pupils. The school is tackling these concerns with more rigorous procedures to ensure pupils learn the importance of good behaviour and taking responsibility for their own actions. Pupils say they feel safe in school and they appreciate the opportunities available to share concerns with staff either by putting a message in the worry box or talking directly to staff. This gives them peace of mind as they know help is readily available and concerns will be resolved. Pupils have a good understanding of their local culture and also learn about other faiths. They are less well informed about life in a multicultural society and the school is looking to develop links with a school with a more diverse population.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching and learning enable pupils to make satisfactory progress. In the best lessons, pupils make good progress because activities are well structured, varied and organised at a brisk pace to generate high levels of interest and enthusiasm. Work is well matched to the pupils' learning needs and there is a good level of challenge, particularly for the more able groups. Pupils are given the opportunity to work with 'talk partners' to develop their ideas and to cooperate well. Pupils are given clear learning objectives so that they know what they are expected to learn and they are given opportunities to discuss strategies to help them complete their work. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were guided on how to use a right angle as their starting point to help them to estimate the size of an angle.

In less effective lessons, the pace of learning is slower and the tasks set for pupils are not matched well enough to their learning needs. The more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Some lessons have too broad a focus and too many learning objectives. Teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of the work that pupils should produce are not always high enough. As a result, pupils are not always clear enough about what they need to do and how to do better. Teaching assistants and learning support assistants are well deployed and work effectively with individuals and groups, such as pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure that they have full access to the curriculum and make satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements enabling pupils to develop satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills. Personal and health education is promoted well and is having a positive impact upon pupils' understanding of the need to live a healthy lifestyle. The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils although the more able are not always sufficiently challenged. Effective links are made between subjects and this enables pupils to make sense of their learning. The school is updating the planning of the curriculum to make it more creative and responsive to pupils' needs.

The curriculum is extended effectively through visits, visitors and clubs. These include a wide range of experiences and are especially good for sport and music. Themed weeks and special days provide much enjoyment and an in-depth study of a subject. For example, the Victorian Day increased pupils' understanding about this period of history through effective use of costumes and artefacts. Pupils have the opportunity to study Spanish which they say that they enjoy. Displays show a wide range of experiences and activities that have been undertaken by pupils, such as the residential visit made by Year 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The pastoral care for pupils is good. Adults in school are very dedicated to the care of all pupils. Appropriate child protection and health and safety procedures are in place and the school meets all current government requirements for safeguarding pupils. Partnerships with external agencies are good, especially for the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These are effective in providing well informed support that is needed, particularly for those pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Very close links with the secondary school lead to a smooth transition for pupils.

Academic guidance is satisfactory overall. Systems to track pupils' progress are good and teachers have an accurate picture of pupils' standards. However, the use of this information in matching learning activities to pupils' needs is not consistently established throughout the school. Marking is carried out regularly and the best practice informs pupils about what they need to do to improve. Pupils have suitable individual targets in writing and mathematics and they say that these help them to work hard because they want to move to the next target. This is a recent initiative and the school rightly has plans to make the targets sharper and to extend them to other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership team and governors set a clear direction for improving the quality of the education offered by the school and have put into place some well thought out strategies during this academic year. The school's self-evaluation is good and data are analysed very well and used most effectively to guide future improvement. Pupils' progress is beginning to improve because those who are not working to expectations are rapidly identified and effective support and intervention is put into place.

The school understands the local context and there is a plan that has been evaluated to establish the school's contribution to community cohesion, which is satisfactory. Pupils have some opportunities to participate in community activities, such as making up Harvest Festival parcels which are distributed in the parish. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective learning support and care, including working in small groups with skilled teaching assistants. Improvements since the last inspection, including the effective use of data analysis in self-evaluation, demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to improve. Value for money is satisfactory.

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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?	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?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

25 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Darwen, Blackburn with Darwen, BB3 2SG

Thank you very much for welcoming my colleague and me when we inspected your school recently. We were impressed with your cheerful smiles and willingness to talk to us. Your views were very helpful. You told us that you enjoy school and this is shown in your good attendance. You enjoy learning to speak Spanish and having themed days, such as the Victorian day. You get on well with the adults in school and you feel able to talk to them if you have any worries. Please thank your parents for replying to the inspection questionnaire and let them know that we have taken their views into account.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and you make satisfactory progress. Your headteacher has considered carefully what needs to be done to further improve your education and has started to make some changes. We have asked your headteacher to look at three things to make it even better.

- Ensure that all of you make the progress you should.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is good or better.
- Match the activities and teaching in the Reception class more closely to the needs of the children in that class.

You can help by working hard and supporting your teachers and headteacher by trying to do your best. Please accept my best wishes for the future and do continue to listen well and show good attitudes to learning so that you can achieve your targets.

Yours faithfully

Andrée Keddle

Additional inspector