

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brindle

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119669
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327104
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

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)	91
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 Paul Binks
Headteacher	Mrs Frances Fordyce
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bournes Row Gregson Lane Hoghton Preston Lancashire

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Inspection number	327104

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school. Numbers have declined since the last inspection but have now stabilised. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The overwhelming majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few have English as an additional language. Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises of a Reception class. There is a privately run Nursery Group on site which was inspected separately by Ofsted.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school in which sustained improvement is underway. Parents are very supportive of the school and recognise that it is getting better. The large majority are very positive about the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of the leadership and management and the care provided for their children.

Children start school in Reception with levels of development that are generally typical for their age. Current Year 1 children left Reception with standards that were above average. This is an improvement on previous years. Progress in Key Stage 1 has improved over the last 18 months and is now good and standards in Year 2 are above average. In Key Stage 2, progress is accelerating but its improvement has been slower and standards at Year 6 remain broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement given the average levels of this group of pupils when they started Year 1.

The quality of provision in terms of the effectiveness of teaching and the impact on learning of the curriculum varies across the school. Both teaching and the curriculum are good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. This is reflected in the differing standards at the end of each key stage. In Years 1 and 2, teachers make good use of assessment to tailor activities to meet each pupil's needs and trust is given to pupils to take responsibility for aspects of their own learning. In Key Stage 2, there is a tendency to give too much teacher direction which restricts opportunities for pupils to make decisions and work independently. This reduces the progress made, most notably for the most able. The curriculum has strengths in its range of extra-curricular activities and in the provision for sport and art. Links between subjects are not consistently exploited however, and at times lessons lack meaning and relevance. This reduces the levels of motivation; most noticeably of older pupils in Key Stage 2.

Pupils' personal development is good. The large majority behave well and they like school. Most know the sensible choices needed to be healthy and to stay fit and generally behave safely. Although the pupils' levels of spiritual, social and moral development are good, and they have a good knowledge and understanding of their own culture, their knowledge and understanding of the multicultural nature of modern society is relatively weak.

Leadership and management are good and are responsible for good levels of care and guidance and for driving up standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The headteacher, supported by a determined assistant headteacher and very knowledgeable governing body, has successfully improved the effectiveness of teaching so that progress is now good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and is accelerating in Key Stage 2. The school knows itself very well and has a good capacity to improve further in future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. It has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Generally, children start with skills that are typical for their age with a relative strength in their personal, social and emotional development. Excellent teaching results in children making rapid progress. Standards at the end of Reception are improving and are now exceeding the above average skills of the previous year. Children develop very good social skills and advanced levels of speaking and early reading and writing. Close links with

parents and carers helps children to be very settled and happy which adds to the progress the children make.

Staff are imaginative in the activities they provide. Using different fruits to make kebabs, yet at the same time exploring the mathematical ideas of repeating patterns, enabled the children to have fun while also learning! Focused interventions led by adults are skilfully woven into the lively play-based curriculum. This enables children to develop a good knowledge and understanding of sounds and blends and to develop early reading and writing skills, mathematical understanding and information and communication technology skills. Planning is constantly being refined; it gives children lots of scope to learn all sorts through their play. For example, singing a song about a 'silly soup' captured the children's imaginations and resulted in them making excellent progress in extending their understanding of the sound of 'ou'.

The provision is extremely well led and managed. The teachers and teaching assistant are a very cohesive team dedicated to providing children with exciting learning, both indoors and out. Very good use is made of the school's natural environment to bring learning alive. Bringing in some eight day old kittens as well as visiting a neighbour's bantam chickens and hens all makes learning about changes fun and real. Assessment is at the heart of the planning and while it is always being developed it is effective in helping staff to plan for the needs of each child. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well and benefit from excellent liaison with parents and the expertise of the local authority. Children are extremely well prepared for moving on to Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 by improving teaching and the curriculum so that:
- all pupils, but particularly the most able, develop their capacity for learning independently
- better links are planned between subjects so that all pupils are inspired to learn and reach higher standards.
- Develop and implement strategies to broaden the knowledge and understanding of pupils of the cultural richness and diversity of modern society.

A small proportion of schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory when the pupils' starting points are considered.

Improvements to the quality of teaching and learning have accelerated progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and standards have risen considerably since the last inspection. Children now start Year 1 with standards that are above average. This has not always been the case and in previous years standards at this point were closer to average.

At the end of Year 2 the average standards seen in recent years have risen. In 2008, standards were above average in writing and much improved in reading. Data held by the school, coupled with inspection evidence, indicates that a good proportion of pupils in the current Year 2 are making good progress in comparison to their average starting points and are currently working at levels that exceed the expectations for their age.

In Key Stage 2, standards during the last three years have been gradually rising and progress is satisfactory. There has been an improvement in English but this has not been matched in mathematics and science. In 2008 standards overall dipped, due to nature of the group but data held by the school indicates that better results are predicted this year. Achievement has been held back in Key Stage 2 because the most able pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn independently and to get fully involved in assessing their own progress.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets and benefit from good strategies for their inclusion in school life.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Above average attendance is an important indicator of the pupils' enjoyment of school. When pupils are trusted to make decisions for themselves and work with others to solve practical problems they thrive and work with animation and excitement. For some older pupils, this expectation for independence is not always there and lessons can lack excitement resulting in some pupils being rather uninterested. Pupils are generally well behaved although a small minority of parents and pupils express some concerns about the behaviour of a few older pupils. The school deals with such issues effectively. The school's accreditation as being a Healthy School is demonstrated by the way pupils taking school dinners tuck into the many salad options available to them in addition to a nutritious hot meal. Pupils know the options required for them to stay safe, fit and healthy. Opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities around school are steadily improving. School councillors carry out their role with pride. Relatively new systems for training play leaders and also for older pupils to act as 'Buddies' for younger ones add to pupils' mature attitudes. They have well developed levels of spiritual, moral and social development but their cultural development is relatively weak. Although pupils have a good understanding of their own way of life, they have little knowledge of the cultural richness and diversity of modern society. The pupils are satisfactorily prepared for secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning reflects the overall achievement in the school. It is satisfactory overall although there are strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, there is some good teaching but, too often, pupils are not enabled to apply and develop their skills independently. Where teaching is good, due account is taken of the pupils' prior learning. Activities are then tailored to pupils' needs and often demand that they use practical skills to solve problems. This was seen when Year 1 and Year 2 pupils worked to meet the challenge of finding the exact quantities of liquid required to make a drink for others using a drink powder. The pupils were encouraged to think about what they already knew and to then use this information to assess what they learnt and how they could do even better. The teaching in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall. It is not better because pupils are over-directed and not trusted to make decisions for themselves. As a result the most able, in particular, lose some motivation which reduces their progress. Some pupils, most noticeably in Key Stage 1, know and understand what they need to do to improve. One Year 2 pupil talked with great authority, for example, about what was needed to be a Level 3 writer. In Key Stage 2, targets for improvement are set for pupils although they are not always specific to pupils'

individual needs. The quality of marking varies but is improving in the way it offers guidance about how to get better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets statutory requirements and has strengths in art and sport and in the range of extra-curricular activities that enrich learning. It is better in Key Stage 1 than Key Stage 2 because learning is more often linked to the pupils' interests and therefore inspires better learning. Generally the benefits of making links between subjects are not planned for which reduces the pupils' overall enjoyment and their creativity. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, but for the more able pupils, a support strategy is in the early stages of development. While good use is made of the immediate environment to help learning, links with the wider world to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures are not fully exploited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are very well cared for and given good support whenever they need personal help or advice. The school places a high priority on keeping pupils healthy and safe and ensuring that all requirements regarding their safeguarding meet current requirements. Good links with the local authority education services and the health agencies enhance the school's good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school works closely with parents to enlist their support with learning at home. There are good procedures to help children starting school in Reception and to ease the transition of pupils in Year 6 as they go to secondary school. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils have been improved recently and are increasingly used to identify and direct support towards pupils who are falling behind. Guidance for the most able is satisfactory but does not consistently offer sufficient challenge so that pupils do as well as they can.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. This is demonstrated by the considerable improvements that have occurred since the last inspection and the current improvement in the school. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's future and is very well informed about its strengths and weaknesses, supported by a dedicated assistant headteacher and mostly enthusiastic staff team. The challenge of raising standards since the previous inspection has been met although more remains to be done in Key Stage 2. Great strides have been made to improve achievement in English and recent initiatives taken in mathematics and science are beginning to raise standards in these subjects too. Targets are now effectively used to focus the efforts of staff and to make sure that the impact of any interventions is monitored. A tight budget, exacerbated by the reduction in numbers, has been carefully managed to ensure that the school maintains a clear educational direction. While the school is totally committed to inclusion, and successfully promotes cohesion within the context of the school and its community, its strategies for broadening the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world and its cultural diversity lack rigour. The school is improving rapidly and, given the current educational direction and leadership, has a good capacity to

continue to improve in future. The school currently deploys resources well to achieve a satisfactory, but improving, value for money.

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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	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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	2

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?	2
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	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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	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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brindle, Lancashire, PR5 0DQ

My inspection of your school was very enjoyable. Thank you for being so friendly and for chatting with me. Your school is led by a very caring headteacher supported by a dedicated set of teachers and adults. The school provides a satisfactory standard of education overall and is improving rapidly. You are right in your view that the school has many good features, but more needs to be done to raise standards in Key Stage 2.

Children in the Reception class have a great start to their school lives and most start Year 1 with high standards. In Years 1 and 2, you all make good progress and do as well as you can. In Years 3 to 6, improvement is occurring but some of you could do better in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Your standards are average but they could be higher.

Your teachers usually give you lots of exciting things to do. You told me that school was fun and it seems to be most of the time, although at times learning could be more fun for the older ones. Most of you like making decisions for yourself and being independent, but some of you could be given more chances to do this. This would help some of you who find work easier to reach even higher standards and I have asked the school to think of ways of doing this.

You are mostly well behaved and thoughtful and are proud of your school and where you live. You need, however, to know more about the different cultures that are in Britain today and I have asked the school to improve your understanding of such matters.

You have a good knowledge of the decisions required to live healthy lives and how to stay safe. This information is important for you to live long and happy lives in future. Please thank your parents/carers for replying to the questionnaire. It was encouraging to find that the large majority support the school and feel that it is improving. I wish you all luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dave Byrne

Lead inspector