

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Withnell

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119680
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327107
Inspection date	5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

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)	45
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 David Southworth
Headteacher	Mr Martin Braithwaite
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bury Lane Withnell Chorley Lancashire PR6 8SD

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	5 March 2009
Inspection number	327107

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Age group 4-11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is much smaller than average in size. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average and most pupils live in areas of social advantage. A small number of pupils are from a minority ethnic background and English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The school has achieved the Activemark and the Healthy Schools Award. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage with Reception children being taught within a mixed age infant class, including Year 1 pupils during morning sessions and Year 1 and Year 2 pupils in afternoon sessions. Year groups are very small and there was no pupil in Year 6 in 2008.

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 with some good features including pupils' good personal development and the highly effective pastoral support and care provided for them. The school provides a calm and happy environment that is appreciated by pupils and parents. Parents have very positive views about the school and say they are confident that the school cares well for their children. As one parent states, 'St Joseph's School has a wonderful family atmosphere', and several parents commented on how approachable members of staff are. Inspectors agree with these views.

Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress by the time they leave Reception. They continue to make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and reach broadly average standards by the time they leave Year 6. This demonstrates satisfactory achievement from their starting points. However, occasionally, results fluctuate as there are very few pupils in each year group and therefore one pupil can represent a high proportion of the results.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are well motivated and benefit from the regular, planned activities to work in pairs and groups which provide valuable opportunities for discussion. However, in some lessons, teaching is not always challenging enough for more able pupils and they do not always have enough opportunities to develop more advanced skills, such as higher level investigative skills, to enable them to achieve the higher levels in national assessments. The pace in some lessons is slow and there is sometimes insufficient rigour in ensuring that pupils complete enough work in the time available; consequently pupils make only satisfactory progress. There are some good features. Good attention is paid to promoting pupils' skills in speaking and listening, and this was demonstrated by their confidence in speaking to an audience when leading an assembly attended by parents during the inspection. Pupils listen carefully to the teacher and each other, and concentrate well on their work.

The curriculum is satisfactory enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used appropriately to support learning and opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills of literacy and numeracy in other subjects are well planned. Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving rapidly. Pupils are fully aware of their own personal targets to help them improve their work, particularly in literacy. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are in place and are being used appropriately to accurately map pupils' achievement and to identify those pupils who need additional help. However, this information is not always being used well enough by all teachers to plan learning which fully meets the needs of all pupils, particularly those who are more able.

The pastoral support for pupils is very good and has a positive impact on pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and demonstrate great care for each other. Relationships with staff are very good and laughter is often heard in lessons. Pupils say they feel safe and they know they can approach any member of staff if they have a worry or concern. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. The school works very closely with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils' personal development is promoted well. The Catholic values of the school shine through in the way that pupils are valued and respected and through the close links with the church.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, staff and governors have taken effective steps to address the areas identified for improvement. Provision for learning

outdoors in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and the school is taking greater account of the views of others in school improvement planning. Standards have improved, particularly in reading across the school and in mathematics and English at Key Stage 2. This demonstrates that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. The headteacher and staff work closely as a team and share responsibility for introducing any new initiatives. However, there is not yet enough rigour in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school to ensure that all pupils, particularly those who are more able, make more rapid progress in their learning. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are committed to improving the school and are becoming increasingly involved in discovering for themselves how well pupils are doing through regular visits. They provide appropriate support and challenge to the school. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

Children enter the school with a range of skills that overall are broadly typical for their age. They make sound progress in the Reception Year and most children achieve the national expectations for their age by the time they enter Year 1. There is a suitable range of purposeful, practical activities that promotes children's development satisfactorily in all areas of learning and improvement in facilities for outdoor learning has been good since the last inspection. However, sometimes activities for the whole group lack sufficient pace to enable children, particularly the more able, to achieve as well as they can. The strong emphasis on personal, social and emotional development helps children to achieve well in this area of learning.

Personal development is good. Children understand the benefits of healthy food and exercise and routinely wash their hands before eating. They feel safe in the supportive, secure environment and clearly enjoy school. Children make a good contribution in class by putting up their hands to answer a question, taking turns and behaving well. They work happily together and this provides a good basis from which to continue their learning in Year 1. The provision for children's welfare is good. There are good procedures for introducing children to school so they settle quickly and develop good attitudes to school from the start. Relationships between adults and children are warm and so children are at ease. Good links with parents support children's learning. Systems for assessing children's progress are sound but these are not always used effectively enough to plan for children at different stages of learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the pace and rigour of learning so that children make more rapid progress.
- Provide sufficient challenge in lessons, particularly for more able pupils, by further developing their higher level skills.
- Monitor and evaluate the work of the school more rigorously to promote more rapid progress in learning.

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. Standards reached in 2008 Year 2 assessments were broadly average in writing and mathematics and above average in reading. This is because more pupils achieved the higher Level 3 in reading, but none reached this level in writing and mathematics. This demonstrates satisfactory progress from pupils' individual starting points. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards have been broadly in line with national expectations over time. However, standards rose to above average in English and well above average in mathematics in 2007. Standards in science remained broadly average partly because fewer pupils reached the higher Level 5 than found nationally. No pupil took the tests in Year 6 in 2008. Work in lessons and in pupils' books, together with the school's own data confirms that current pupils make satisfactory progress and are on track to reach their targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English make equivalent progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. They talk with enthusiasm about the range of different activities and clubs on offer and particularly look forward to the residential activity holiday. They have a clear understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle, eating healthy food and taking regular, vigorous exercise. They say they feel safe because everyone gets on in class and in the playground. They are secure in the knowledge that should they have a problem they can approach an adult in school for help. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community through their responsibilities, for example, as school councillors and older pupils routinely support younger ones at playtimes. Pupils also contribute well to the wider community by singing in church and by joining in village activities such as the 'Daffodil Duddle' for charity. They have sound basic skills which prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education. Behaviour is good. Adults treat each other and the pupils with respect and this provides a good role model for pupils to follow. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The ethos of the school is strongly rooted in their Catholic beliefs and contributes well to pupils' spiritual development. This was vividly demonstrated in their spiritual awareness shown through the assembly shared with parents during the inspection. Pupils' singing on this occasion was extremely moving. They gain a good understanding of world faiths and other cultures, for example, by visiting a synagogue and through recent celebrations of Chinese New Year. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. They develop good social skills through their effective links with the local church, from their participation in events in the village, for example, in an environmental project, and through sporting events with other schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons provide interesting activities which engage pupils in their learning. However, the pace and rigour of learning in some lessons is not brisk enough and therefore the rate of progress slows. In some lessons, teaching is not always matched

closely enough to all pupils' abilities, particularly those who are more able. As a result, these pupils do not always reach the standards of work of which they are capable, partly because they do not always have enough opportunities to develop their higher level skills. In the better lessons, teaching is focused more closely on pupils' different abilities and needs within the mixed age classes and the level of challenge is appropriate. This was seen when support staff were deployed well to support groups of pupils with differing abilities. There are some good features. In many lessons, teachers demonstrate effective questioning techniques and provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in speaking and listening. Pupils listen attentively and concentrate well. The best marking is carried out conscientiously and teachers provide helpful written or verbal comments. They also identify areas where work could be improved or ask searching questions and pupils are given appropriate opportunities to respond. However, this is not always consistent across the school. Teaching assistants provide effective support, particularly for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English to enable them to participate fully in all lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is a satisfactory focus on developing pupils' basic skills, enabling them to make satisfactory progress. The school is taking effective steps to enable pupils to practise their basic skills when studying other subjects. A good example of this is when pupils were developing their literacy skills in a mathematics lesson through writing their own problems based on traditional tales. Another example was when pupils were designing gift cards using ICT. Care is taken in the planning of the curriculum to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Pupils' personal development is promoted well through aspects of the curriculum including personal, social, health and citizenship education. Pupils have a secure awareness of healthy lifestyles and are taught about the potential dangers they may face. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities including music, a book club and a variety of sports including golf, gymnastics and cross-country running in partnership with other schools. Many relevant visits out of school are closely linked with the curriculum, for example, a residential visit to Wales. All pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to learn French.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. The pastoral care and support for pupils are very good. All the recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. This is an extremely caring school where pupils feel very secure and at ease. The strong ethos of care and mutual respect provides clear guidance for pupils' own attitudes and behaviour, and has a significant impact on their good personal development. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage. They receive good support to help them to participate well in lessons and so they make similar progress to others in their year group. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning English also receive effective support and are able to participate in all the school has to offer. The school has highly effective links with other professionals to obtain specialist support where needed. Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving rapidly. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are in place and are being used appropriately but it is too soon to judge their impact on pupils' achievement, particularly for those who are more able. Pupils receive clear guidance on what they need to do to improve and they are familiar with their own personal targets, particularly in literacy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school evaluates the quality of leadership and management as satisfactory and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. The headteacher works hard, together with staff, to create a happy and inclusive school where all members of the school community are valued. Staff work closely as a team to introduce and build upon a range of initiatives to improve standards and teaching and learning. There is evidence of the impact of these in the improved standards, for example, in reading throughout the school and in mathematics and English at the end of Key Stage 2. New staff are developing their roles as curriculum leaders and undertaking valuable training. The governing body is supportive and very committed. Governors are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school through regular visits and through nominated governor links. However, senior leaders do not always monitor and evaluate the work of the school rigorously enough to enable them to take prompt action to make sure that all pupils, particularly more able pupils, make rapid enough progress. The school is making satisfactory progress towards improving community cohesion. There are good links with the local community but national and global links are not yet fully developed, although the school has recently developed links with a school in France.

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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?	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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?	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	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

7 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Withnell, Lancashire, PR6 8SD

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. We were impressed with your good behaviour and also your enjoyment of school and how well you look after each other. We thought your assembly and particularly your singing were wonderful. Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires and tell them that we took all of their views into account. We agree with their views that the school takes good care of you and that it has a warm family atmosphere.

Yours is a satisfactory school. You attain standards in your work which are expected for your age and you make satisfactory progress. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There are some things that are good, including how well adults look after you and help you to feel safe. You clearly enjoy school very much and often share jokes and laughter with your teachers, but you also know you can go to any member of staff if you have a concern or worry and they will help you. You also told us that you enjoy after school clubs and particularly the annual residential visit in Wales. You contribute well to your local community by being involved in activities in the village and with the local church.

There are some things that can be done to make your school better. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you all make more progress by enabling you to learn even more in each lesson and at a quicker pace. We have also asked them to make sure that more of you reach the higher levels in your work with challenging activities for those who find tasks easy to do. We have also asked that school leaders check more often to find out how well you are doing and make sure that you are all learning as much as you can.

You can help by telling your teachers what makes your lessons exciting and what helps you to learn.

Thank you again for helping to make our time with you enjoyable and we hope that you continue to be happy at school. Keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster HMIShirley Herring

(Lead inspector)(Additional Inspector)