

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107544
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	331421
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Hoban HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	172
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pauline Fothergill
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Hutton
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	Portland Road Halifax West Yorkshire HX3 6LA
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). They visited 14 lessons and held meetings with: the senior leadership team; subject leaders and other staff; governors, the school improvement partner; and groups of parents and pupils. HMI observed the school's work and looked at the school's documentation, including policies, its development plan and community cohesion action plan; pupils' work, and questionnaires completed by staff and parents. Forty nine parental questionnaires were returned, representing 66 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well pupils make progress and enjoy learning.
- The quality of the school's work, particularly its teaching and learning.
- The leadership and management of the school.
- The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision.

Information about the school

St Joseph's is a smaller than average primary school, serving much of Halifax, including wards experiencing significant socio-economic disadvantage. Pupils typically enter the school with skills which are below average for their age. Although take-up of free school meals is below the national average, the number of pupils known to be eligible is higher. The school has EYFS provision in the Reception class.

The school has secured the Quality Mark award; the Artsmark Gold award; the Activemark; the Healthy Schools award and has Investors in People, which was re-accredited in July 2007. A pre and post school club operates on the site and was the subject of a separate inspection at the time HMI visited the school.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	172	Below average
Free school meals	7.6%	Below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	26.9%	Well above average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	6%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	2.0%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	2.3%	Above average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Joseph's is an outstanding school, where high achievement walks hand in hand with outstanding pastoral care and exemplary behaviour. Pupils enter the school with skills that are typically below those expected for their age, and by the time pupils leave St Joseph's their attainment is well above national averages. The improvement in pupils' attainment is a result of good teaching and learning; outstanding behaviour and relationships; effective actions of the senior leadership team and very well targeted interventions to improve individual pupils' progress. The school's leadership team has acted vigorously to deal with the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection, including the development of what is now an outstanding tracking system. Given the improvement in outcomes since the last inspection and the ability of senior and subject leaders to drive and sustain further improvement, capacity to improve is outstanding. Parents, pupils and staff are rightly proud of the work of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Raise the quality of teaching and learning further throughout the school by making best use of outstanding practice. To achieve this, the school should:

- Encourage all pupils to explain, reason and justify their reasoning.
- Develop greater links between the different subjects to enable pupils to improve their writing skills.
- Increase the amount of investigation carried out by pupils, particularly in foundation subjects.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children typically enter the school with skills which are below expectations for their age and well below in their mathematical development and early literacy. The inspectors found that children make good progress in the EYFS so that when they enter Year 1, their skills, understanding and knowledge are at the expectation in their personal, social, emotional, physical and mathematical development. Their writing skills are below the expectation. Pupils make steady progress in Key Stage 1 so that by the time they leave Year 2, their

attainment is just above the national average. Pupils make outstanding progress in Key Stage 2. The provisional 2008 Year 6 national test results showed that all boys and girls reached the average level in English, mathematics and science, and high proportions attained the higher levels in science, mathematics and in reading. This was corroborated by other evidence of outstanding progress at St Joseph's seen by the inspectors in, for example, pupils' work and in some lessons. The higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress at St Joseph's, as a result of effective teaching and learning and very effective interventions provided by the school.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Excellent behaviour in classrooms enhances learning. Pupils effectively support each other on joint tasks and this helps to create an industrious environment, in which respectful relationships between staff and pupils are nurtured. Attendance has improved since 2007 and is just above the national average. This has been brought about through the school and its partners effectively targeting patterns of weaker attendance amongst some pupils.

Pupils feel very safe, and this is supported by parents' comments. Any issues pupils raise are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Pupils understand the necessity for a healthy lifestyle and comment approvingly of the availability of water, salad, milk and fruit in the school, with their involvement in promoting healthy lifestyles principally related to physical activities. The inspectors' observations indicated that pupils were eating healthily at lunchtime. Pupils are active in the playground and take advantage of the good range of after school activities. Pupils' good relationships with others extend to partners beyond the school, including sharing their skills in the performing arts with other local schools, or supporting the homeless. Pupils' good cultural awareness is demonstrated through their individual work, elements of the curriculum and charitable work with the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The quality of the school's work

Teaching and learning is good overall, with some outstanding elements. HMI noted that the very best teaching is typified by: activities that challenge and develop the full range of abilities within the class; teachers' skilled use of questions; work that develops pupils' thinking and interpretive skills; pupils' high levels of activity and engagement and their outstanding behaviour, which contributes strongly to their learning. In an outstanding EYFS dance lesson, the brisk warm up was followed by children responding very well to the excellent adult input on how to interpret the emergence of a flower from a seed. The teacher's skilled use of praise and high expectations of behaviour meant that the children made outstanding progress in their ability to perform different balances and movements. Of particular strength was the teacher's subtle use of prompts and questions which enabled children to practise, refine, evaluate and improve their sequence.

In the small number of less effective, but nonetheless satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning was slower. Some pupils spent too long listening passively and there were fewer opportunities for them to extend their thinking or to explain and justify their views. This meant that opportunities for pupils to make faster progress were missed. However, the attitudes and industry of pupils in such lessons did mean that almost all pupils made at least satisfactory progress. The inspectors observed that marking of pupils' work was variable, with the best marking referring pupils back to their targets, thereby helping them to obtain a clear picture of their own progress. Where marking was weaker, it did not provide pupils with clear examples of how to improve their work.

The good curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and is enriched with a good balance of extra-curricular activities and an extensive range of themed days or weeks. Trips, visitors and events are used strategically to extend pupils' learning and to enable them to gain a full picture of what they are learning about. Subject coordinators use an extensive range of strategies to monitor their subjects, including learning walks, pupils' questionnaires and work scrutiny. They visit other schools to learn of best practice elsewhere and are aware of the key strengths and areas for development, which they are tackling through their own subject's action plan. The school's support for its pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, is outstanding, with the tracking system and pastoral care both used effectively. As a result, adult interventions are proportionate and successful in supporting pupils when difficulties emerge in school or outside. Teaching assistants are well trained and highly skilled. They, along with the deputy headteacher, critically monitor the impact of interventions and provide bespoke support for individuals and groups of pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders' and managers' monitoring and evaluation is rigorous and informs very good planning for improvement in the key stages. The school's tracking system incorporates pastoral and academic data. It is a sophisticated instrument that enables acute and effective support to be provided to targeted pupils or groups of pupils, to enable them to make better progress. This means that all groups have an equal opportunity to make outstanding progress, including the small proportion of black and minority ethnic pupils at St Joseph's.

Relevant child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place. Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Staff and governors work very well with outside agencies and partners to ensure that pupils are well protected and supported.

The governing body has a clear picture of St Joseph's strengths and what the school needs to do to move forward. It utilises its members' professional knowledge to act as a critical friend, for instance in relation to the purchase of learning resources. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She projects a vision of each child achieving their full potential, according to their individual gifts. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher who carefully monitors pupils' progress and the teachers who have been instrumental in developing the outstanding tracking system. Relationships with parents are good, and partnerships work highly effectively at a series of levels – for instance, as an extended school St Joseph's offers the local community opportunities to learn conversational Spanish or French, or learn computer skills; or with local authority consultants, whose work includes providing guidance on improving 'high level' writing.

St Joseph's makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Its action plan reflects effective work, ranging from the school to international levels. For instance, St Joseph's works with the local schools' cluster group to enable its pupils to experience the traditions of other cultures, including Indian dance. On the international dimension, the school has worked closely with another local primary school and has contributed to its fundraising events for a school in Pakistan that was severely damaged by earthquakes. Pupils were informed of the rebuilding progress through assemblies. Beyond that, pupils are constantly made aware of the plight of others during times of national and international disasters. All in all, the high quality of the school's educational provision, including the highly effective deployment of teaching assistants, (who contribute materially to the outstanding progress pupils make), and the effective husbandry of the budget, means that value for money is outstanding.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2

Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the EYFS is good. Children in the Reception class make good progress in all areas of learning because they are well supported and guided. There is a good balance between teacher-led and child-led activities. Children are able to explore, think and extend their skills across all areas of learning. For example, in one lesson, all children reinforced and extended their counting skills at the same time as developing their physical skills. The curriculum is flexible and fluid and activities change, sometimes daily, in response to children's ideas, needs and interests. Very good links with parents also influence activities. For example, a parent wrote a note about what their child had done at the weekend; this was used extremely well by staff to extend this experience into activities in the class. In a very small number of lessons, adults missed some opportunities to extend children's writing skills; and activities were not always linked to the learning objective of the lesson.

The classroom is secure, but the building's limitations mean that pupils have to go upstairs to the toilets and there is no direct access to the outdoor area. Good leadership from the class teacher (who is recently new to EYFS), supported by the headteacher, has ensured that these potential barriers have no detrimental effect on pupils' achievement or welfare. Resources are well maintained, accessible and in a good condition. Welfare provision is outstanding and enables children to be very well supported so that they gain in self-esteem, independence and make good progress in their social skills.

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 the children in the EYFS promoted?*	1
How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	2

* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

Views of parents and carers

Replies to the inspection questionnaire were received from the parents of about two

fifths of the pupils. The vast majority of parents who replied are content with the quality of education and care provided at St Joseph's. Comments included 'all the staff work very hard to ensure that each child is valued and well supported'; and 'the teachers at St Joseph's are fantastic', and 'I feel, as a parent, that each year it can't get better at St Joseph's for my son – but it does!' A small number of parents indicated that they did not receive sufficient information about their child's progress.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



3 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Halifax, HX3 6LA

You may remember that inspectors visited your school to see how well St Joseph's is supporting your education and your care. This letter offers our view of your school; and I am delighted to say to you that we judge St Joseph's to be an outstanding school.

There are many reasons why St Joseph's is an outstanding school, and a few of these are as follows:

- you make excellent progress in your time at school, because of the good teaching and learning, as well as the excellent range of extra work supporting your learning
- your behaviour is exemplary. Your outstanding behaviour means that you work effectively in classrooms
- the care and support provided by the school is excellent and contributes to your outstanding progress and
- your school is extremely well led by your headteacher, who is ably supported by her management team and the rest of the staff of St Joseph's.

We also saw some outstanding teaching at your school, and we want that excellent practice to be more widespread. We have, therefore, asked your headteacher and your other teachers to make teaching throughout St Joseph's even better.

Finally, it was a privilege for us to visit St Joseph's and to see the work of your teachers and to meet and talk with you.

We both wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mike Hoban
Her Majesty's Inspector

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