

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101546
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	335744
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T O'Rourke
Headteacher	Mrs P Gibney
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors visited 17 lessons and held discussions with governors, staff and pupils. They also talked to parents at the school gate. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including records of pupils' progress and the school development plan. They also took into account the views of parents and staff expressed in questionnaires.

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

- the extent to which the most able pupils are challenged in writing
- the effectiveness of transition arrangements from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 1
- the strengths in provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English as an additional language.

Information about the school

This larger than average infant school serves an ethnically diverse community with most pupils coming from Catholic backgrounds. The majority of pupils have English as an additional language and many are at the early stages of learning English when they join. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication or behavioural and emotional problems. Since September 2008, the school has been part of a 'soft federation' with its neighbouring junior school. The headteacher acts as executive headteacher of both schools, whilst the associate headteacher is responsible for the school on a day-to-day basis. The school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Nursery and Reception classes although not all the Nursery children had started school as the inspection was early in the school year. The school is accredited as a Healthy School and also has gained an Activemark in recognition of its work in physical education and sport.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school of which parents, pupils, staff and governors are justifiably proud. One parent, echoing the views of many wrote, 'This is an excellent school and my two young boys love being a part of this family.' Good at its last inspection, the school has not been content to rest on its laurels but has continued to grow and develop under the excellent leadership of its headship team members. They have established a very strong ethos of teamwork and a belief in the school's continuing success.

Consequently, high levels of attainment have been maintained over many years and any identified weaknesses very effectively addressed. For example, much has been accomplished since the previous inspection in helping children to adjust more easily to the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1. Over the past year, a successful focus on writing has helped raise the attainment of the most able writers. All of this indicates that the school is extremely well placed to move from strength to strength.

At the heart of the school's work is a warm and caring atmosphere where all are welcome. This was very evident in an assembly when the new Reception children were received very warmly by the older pupils. In their reflective and considered contributions, pupils demonstrated many of the qualities that result in their excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The assembly also showed that every child really does matter at this school. This is evident in the excellent support for vulnerable pupils and their families and the extremely robust arrangements for ensuring that all children are safe. Consequently, children quickly settle when they arrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage and become eager and confident learners. They told inspectors that they feel very safe as they have every confidence in the adults around them. Their behaviour is exemplary.

The school not only cares for every child but also has high expectations of them. Those who arrive in the Nursery and Reception classes with little or no English quickly acquire the language they need to make sense of the curriculum. Thereafter, their excellent attitudes to learning, very effective support systems and good teaching ensure that they make rapid progress and achieve extremely well. Pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, many who have had to learn English, do equally well. Similarly, those who find learning more difficult, and a few with behavioural and emotional difficulties, do well in response to the caring and sensitive support.

Most of the teaching inspectors saw was good or better. Teachers enjoy excellent relationships with their classes and manage them well. They use information and communication technology (ICT) very effectively to enhance and support learning. Teachers generally plan well to meet the wide ranging needs of pupils. Occasionally,

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they do not make the purpose of lessons clear enough to pupils and do not give enough guidance on how they might improve. Also the pace of learning dips when pupils have to sit for too long or when follow up activities are undemanding.

Pupils enjoy school because, as one pupil said, 'It has everything I want.' They particularly enjoy the many additional opportunities provided by the excellent curriculum to develop their skills and interest in the arts, music and sport, for example. These latter activities enhance pupils' excellent understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The school's commitment in this area has been recognised by the Activemark and Healthy School award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that by July 2010 almost all lessons are good and by July 2011 a majority are outstanding through:
- ensuring that the level of pace and challenge is maintained throughout lessons
- ensuring that teachers make the purpose of learning clear to pupils and give them effective guidance to help them to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

In the classroom, pupils are eager to learn and are highly motivated. They respond well to the activities they are given and cooperate effectively. They also develop good levels of independence which enable most to sustain interest and concentration without direct adult supervision. Pupils make very good progress in the development of their speaking and listening skills through the many opportunities they have for partner work and to discuss their ideas. These are key skills for the majority of pupils who speak English as an additional language and underpin their excellent progress in other areas. By the time they leave, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is significantly above average. This represents excellent achievement from often low starting points.

The improved progress in writing was evident in Year 2 lessons when more able pupils responded well to the challenge to write interesting and engaging accounts evoking the sights and sounds of the seaside. Pupils also develop very good skills in ICT which, together with their strong basic skills, prepare them well for the next stage of their education and the world beyond. Pupils' attendance was much improved in 2009 but remains broadly average.

Parents believe that their children are safe at school. Pupils are proud of the contribution they make to maintaining a safe and happy environment, for example in their roles as 'playground friends'. They take their many responsibilities seriously and feel that their views are taken into account. Their role in the school's development is evident, for example in their innovative designs for improvements to the playground. The pupils are also aware of the needs of the wider community and raise money for charities both home and abroad.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The school provides for its pupils extremely well both personally and academically. The majority of pupils speaking English as an additional language do very well because of effective and consistent support from teachers and other adults in the school. The planning checklist, for example, ensures that pupils' needs are addressed in each lesson. Similarly, those with speech, language and communication difficulties succeed because they are identified at an early stage and given tailored help by high quality support staff which supports them very effectively. The school also provides well for its more able pupils, as seen in the proportions who do well for their age. Their needs are generally met well in class and there are additional programmes for pupils identified as gifted and talented in sport and ICT, for example.

Transition arrangements from Reception to Year 1 are now much better because many of the key elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum continue to be part of pupils' experience as they move into Year 1. In a Year 1 science lesson, for example, pupils consolidated as a class their understanding of the senses before exploring aspects of the topic in groups in practical and play situations. Pupils also spend some of their time back in the Reception classes, which has proved to be extremely beneficial. This is indicative of how the school's caring ethos and curriculum provide exceptionally well for pupils' personal development. An initiative to improve attendance led to significant improvements in the last academic year.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Teachers assess pupils' progress diligently and use the information effectively to create groups and to set work that is at the right level of challenge. They also routinely share the intentions of lessons with pupils, although there is occasional confusion between the learning and the activity. As a result, in these lessons, pupils are not always clear about what they have learnt and how they might improve.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The effectiveness of the school's leadership in driving improvement, and in securing the support of staff, is evident in the unanimously positive responses to the staff questionnaire. One teacher, typifying the views of others, commented, 'I am extremely proud to work in this school. The children and staff are highly valued. We all aim to follow and reach our mission statement.' Leaders at all levels play their part in maintaining high attainment and improving provision in their areas. They analyse the school's performance accurately and meet challenging targets for improvement.

The 'soft federation' has provided school leaders and governors with additional challenges which they have readily embraced. For example, it has allowed the executive headteacher and associate headteacher to develop their leadership skills very effectively and to widen the curriculum for pupils. Governors are very supportive and knowledgeable and hold school leaders to account well. Leaders and governors take their responsibility to promote equal opportunities very seriously and the success of this commitment is evident in the ethos of the school and the performance of the pupils. The school does a great deal to promote community cohesion within its own locality and further afield. Leaders and governors acknowledge that they have not yet developed a clear strategy to develop it further based on an incisive analysis of their community's needs.

Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust. High levels of awareness of issues related to safety and safeguarding permeate the work of the school. Leaders also work in very close partnership with a range of agencies to promote pupils' welfare and education. For example, the school is very proud to be one of the first infant schools to receive a travel accreditation award from Transport for London. The school also works exceptionally well with its parents. One summed up the views of most when they commented, 'I am delighted with the education, care and attention my child receives.'

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children begin in the Nursery most speak little or no English. The school builds very good links with parents through home visits and induction sessions. This gives parents confidence in the school and enables their children to settle very quickly. Children had only just begun in the Nursery at the time of the inspection but the data shows that they make exceptionally good progress which continues in to the Reception classes. Teaching and provision are of high quality. Routines are quickly established and support for children learning English is very effective. Very good planning ensures that children's skills are developed in all areas of their learning and there is a good balance of direct teaching and opportunities for children to explore the world for themselves. The outdoor areas are not ideal in terms of size and location but the school makes careful arrangements to ensure that children get every opportunity to use them. Assessment of every step of learning is meticulous and leadership is of high quality. In consequence, children make exceptionally good progress. In 2009, standards were above average when children moved into Year 1 representing outstanding achievement from their starting points.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The good level of returns from parents demonstrated overwhelmingly positive views about the school. All parents indicate that their children enjoy school, the teaching is good and that they are happy overall with their children's experience. Very few comments were made on the questionnaires but these tended to highlight the family atmosphere and the high levels of care and support. Others spoke about the significant progress made by their children and commended the headteacher and other staff. The inspection evidence fully supports these positive views. Only four returns indicated areas of unhappiness. One of these remarked on the security of the premises. Inspectors found that safeguarding procedures are robust and that governors and staff do everything possible to keep children safe. Another commented on the policy on school meals but inspectors found that the school's policy on allergies was entirely appropriate in order to safeguard all children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Infant to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 270 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	80	15	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	81	13	18	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	62	28	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	58	29	39	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	65	26	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	59	28	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	73	19	26	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	51	32	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	51	32	43	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	53	32	43	0	0	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	49	33	45	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	57	30	40	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	72	21	28	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Infant School, Wembley HA9 6TA

You may remember that I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. We really enjoyed talking to you. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

You and your parents are right to be proud of St Joseph's because it is an outstanding school. You all told us how much you enjoy school and how well the staff look after you. We were really pleased to see your excitement in lessons. We thought your behaviour was really good. Well done! We were pleased to see how much your attendance improved last year. Keep it up because you need to come to school every day to learn. We really liked the way you all help each other as playground friends and in other ways. You also told us how much you like the extra clubs you have and these help you to keep fit and healthy.

Your teachers make lessons interesting and fun for you and give you work that is not too hard and not too easy. They also give you every chance to use the computers which you really enjoy. Those of you who find learning a little bit harder get lots of help and do well. By the time you move on to the juniors you are doing very well in reading, writing and mathematics.

Your executive headteacher has led the school very well for a number of years. She gets lots of help from the associate headteacher and all the staff. Even though you are doing so well they want to make things even better for you. We have suggested one thing which we think might help:

- Your teachers are doing a very good job but in a few lessons you need more help with your learning. We have asked the teachers to always let you know what you are learning and sometimes to give you more help to get better.

Good luck to all of you!

Yours faithfully

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector

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