

St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109635
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	337339
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	476
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Augustina Williams
Headteacher	Jacqueline Lee
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors

- observed 19 teachers in 31 classroom visits, where teachers taught a number of subjects. Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher and a number of staff responsible for key areas of the school's work. Inspectors looked at planning, minutes of meetings, other documentation including that relating to safeguarding, pupils' work and progress records. Questionnaires returned by 117 parents and carers, 97 pupils and 18 members of staff were analysed

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

- pupils current rate of progress and attainment in English, mathematics and science
- how well pupils develop personally, act as ambassadors for the school and help new arrivals settle into school
- the extent to which teaching and the curriculum is tailored to pupils' needs
- pupils' awareness and understanding of cultural and social diversity in our society.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average. Two fifths of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The number of such pupils has risen since the last inspection, with many joining the school from Poland. Around one in six speak English as an additional language and a very small minority is at an early stage of learning English. The numbers joining or leaving the school part way through the year is also increasing. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found in most schools. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional or social needs. The school has many awards including the Primary Quality Mark and has achieved Healthy Schools status.

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

All groups of pupils receive an outstanding quality of education at this innovative and highly inclusive school which has extremely strong links with its parents. This is summed up well by one parent who wrote to say, 'I am 100% happy with St Josephs. The teaching is good, the care given to pupils is excellent and my son particularly likes the exciting curriculum'. Pupils are extremely happy and safe at school and the vast majority say they learn a lot in lessons and teachers are always there to help them reach their goals.

Provision in science is impressive. The curriculum really excites pupils' learning and attainment is high. In this subject, all groups of pupils make rapid progress because of the high emphasis given to pupils planning and carrying out their own investigations. The very strong focus given to developing scientific language also helps pupils think clearly and accurately explain their answers to difficult questions. Attainment in English and mathematics is above average. All groups of pupils make consistently good progress in these two subjects. This is because teachers use the excellent information they have on pupils' performance to tailor learning to their abilities. However, this match of work to ability is not always as sharp or as individualised as it might be and this is the key reason why pupils' overall achievement is good rather than outstanding.

Almost all the outcomes for pupils' personal development are outstanding. The extremely good relationships between staff and pupils and the time spent on helping pupils developing a clear set of beliefs and values are central to the school's success. What shines through is the way in which pupils think deeply about their own and other people's experiences and beliefs, and their respect for opinions and lifestyles that are different to their own. Pupils' understanding of other cultures in the school, the town and much wider afield is impressive. This is evident in the very successful steps they take to support community cohesion by acting as strong ambassadors for tolerance and harmony in the school and in the local community. Behaviour is exemplary in classrooms and around the school because high expectations of self-discipline have been so very well fostered. Pupils' awareness of how to keep fit and healthy is also outstanding. This is reflected in the high take-up of sporting activities and helped by the extremely strong sporting partnerships with other schools.

The innovative curriculum not only ensures pupils acquire basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology at a good rate but also develops very good group working, research and risk-taking skills. The high quality 'creative curriculum' which links subjects together into interesting topics, days devoted to a particular theme and exciting trips out provide pupils with many memorable experiences to treasure. The school pays outstanding attention to the personal needs of

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individual pupils to ensure that they take full advantage of all that is on offer. This is especially well focused on new arrivals, pupils who have additional learning needs and/or disabilities or whose families are facing difficult circumstances.

Much of the success of the school is down to the headteacher's high aspirations which are shared by governors, senior leaders and managers at all levels. Collectively, they show no complacency and are ambitious for every aspect of the school's work to be excellent. The outstanding capacity to improve is based on a sharp evaluation of the school's performance which informs the exceptionally clear and very accurate priorities for improvement. Past plans have enabled the school to improve many aspects of leadership and management, teaching and the curriculum which, in turn, have enhanced the overall effectiveness of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Boost the progress and attainment of all groups of pupils in English and mathematics to the high levels seen in science by sharpening and finely tailoring learning to pupils' individual capabilities and needs.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' above average attainment in the current Year 6 reflects that typically seen in recent years. Attainment in science remains high and the proportion of pupils reaching high levels is significantly above the national average. Above average attainment has been sustained and built upon in English and mathematics against a backcloth of the starting points of pupils being slightly lower than normal. Attainment is also good in subjects such as art, French, music and physical education because of the stimulating nature of the curriculum. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in all year groups. Teachers quickly spot any pupil who is falling behind and put in bespoke provision to help them catch up and make the good progress that other pupils do. This is especially beneficial for Polish pupils who have little or no English when they arrive.

The presentation of work in pupils' books is first class and reflects the pride they take in their learning. Pupils' excellent behaviour and enthusiasm helps them learn well in many lessons. For example, pupils in Year 3 worked collaboratively and at a good pace when talking to their partners to identify the features of a letter. In some lessons, learning is even brisker when the tasks are honed to help them practise their skills very well. Such fine tuning was seen when a Year 4 teacher enabled pupils to be totally engaged by using high quality questioning and flash cards to help lower attaining pupils rapidly find information from a text.

Pupils are very committed to their school and local community. There are many opportunities for them to help, such as by being selected as a prefect or acting as a buddy to a new arrival. Many are on either the school council or the 'pupil voice' symposium which advises the headteacher on matters of importance to the pupils. The excellent improvements they have helped to bring about are seen in the design of a new

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school badge and 'friendship stop' in the playground and enhancements to school policies and practices. The reputation of the school is considerably enhanced by the funds they raise for a wide range of charities. Attendance is above average and improved and pupils are punctual. This and pupils' good basic skills prepares them well for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

All lessons observed had a number of strong features which made them consistently exciting and interesting. Teachers use various methods to ensure that the pace of lessons is good. Relationships between adults and pupils are firm but friendly. Teaching assistants support pupils who need extra support very well while also contributing to the learning of other ability groups. Teachers plan well together in each year group and their sharing of best practice contributes to the consistency of teaching. Their improved use of assessment information has enabled learning to be challenging and better matched to the needs of pupils of all abilities. In the very best lessons, this practice is more embedded and sharply applied so that pupils make rapid progress. Pupils know

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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their targets well, what level they are working on and the areas they need to focus on to improve their work. There are many examples of exemplary marking in English which give pupils very clear pointers for improvement, but fewer in mathematics, even though there is good dialogue about progress.

The vibrant curriculum is further enriched by many 'theme' days. On one such occasion, each class had to learn about a European country and present their findings to the rest of the year group. Memorably for the pupils, this even included Greek dancing. One pupil said that, 'The creative curriculum is my favourite lesson.' It is easy to see why. Years 6 pupils were enthused about visiting Kew Gardens and Year 3 pupils were engrossed in designing and making model planes. A full programme of lunchtime and after-school clubs adds considerably to pupils' enthusiasm and learning. This is evident from the school choir, in which one quarter of the school participate including many boys.

Pupils are known as individuals and teachers keep a very watchful eye on pupils' pastoral needs. The very large majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress as their peers because of the excellent provision for their care, guidance and support. The school's dedicated family workers are very effective in working with pupils and families facing challenging circumstances and pupils often blossom as a result of this positive support. Excellent arrangements are in place when pupils join or leave the school helping them to settle into their new schools as quickly as possible.

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 headteacher's inspirational leadership and vision for the school are fully shared by all staff who are extremely focused on providing the very best for all pupils. Leaders and managers at all levels rigorously evaluate their areas of responsibility and the impact of any initiatives they undertake. As a result, the school's plans for development are sharply focused on a small number of very well prioritised issues. Well honed procedures are in place to further develop the quality of teaching. Records and observations in the inspection show that this has helped improve teaching so that it is consistently good with a growing proportion that is outstanding. The two-way links with parents are excellent. First-rate communication, via newsletters, email and the website, keeps them regularly informed and, in turn, they help, for example, in drawing up and refining

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school policies.

The governing body has a high level of insight into the many strengths and very few weakness of the school gained through their extremely well run committee structure and their very active involvement in the school. Governing body meetings have a clear focus on the school development plan so they are able to offer both professional support and hold the school fully to account. Many policies that are in place, such as that for sex and relationship education have been drawn up in consultation with parents. The staff and governors are very successful in ensuring the equality of pupils in this extremely inclusive school. This is evident in the minimal unevenness in performance of different groups and the excellent partnership with outside agencies which ensure that every pupil is cared for extremely well and has a personalised curriculum. Safeguarding procedures are robust, updated regularly and consistently applied but parents and pupils are not fully involved in contributing their feedback.

The school promotes community cohesion within its own and local communities extremely effectively. Close links with a range of local faith groups and community organisations help pupils learn about local social and cultural points of view and celebrate the diversity of where they live. Extensive links with schools in America, Australia, Italy and Africa have an excellent impact on pupils' awareness of how people live in other countries and they, in turn, learn about life in Luton.

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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents strongly agree that they are happy with their child's

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experience at St Josephs. The majority of parents who wrote comments on the questionnaires were extremely supportive of the school. A very small number of parents thought that behaviour was not good enough. However, the inspectors judge that behaviour of pupils of all ages is exemplary at all times.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Catholic Junior School 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 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 476 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	44	65	56	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	62	43	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	44	62	53	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	40	66	56	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	50	57	49	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	41	66	56	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	40	69	59	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)	46	39	69	59	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	39	69	59	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	47	55	47	6	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	28	73	62	6	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	48	57	49	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	53	51	44	3	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



7 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Junior School, Luton, LU3 2NS

If you remember, I recently visited your school with three other colleagues to inspect the work of the school and check how well you are doing. I am extremely pleased to report that you go to an outstanding school and you are doing extremely well.

Inspectors like these things about your school

Your attainment is above average because the teaching is consistently good.

The outstanding curriculum provides you with many memorable experiences.

Science is a real strength. We can see why you enjoy this so much. You make rapid progress in this subject and really enjoy the exciting investigations.

Your behaviour is exemplary. I am very pleased about this and so should you.

Many aspects of your personal development, like knowing how to keep safe and how to live healthy lifestyles, are far better than in most primary schools.

Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is also outstanding. We are particularly impressed in the way you all get on extremely well and act as very good ambassadors for tolerance and harmony in the local community.

You carry out jobs in the school very willingly and not only help it run smoothly and improve but find the time to raise a lot of money for charity.

Your headteacher, senior leaders and governing body provide outstanding leadership and are always looking for any way to make the school better.

Your headteacher wants to make the school even better. I have asked your school to focus on this one thing to improve further.

Better match your work in English and mathematics to your abilities so your attainment is even higher.

You can help to make the school even better by regularly discussing your progress with your teachers and letting them know when you are ready to do harder work. I wish you every future success.

Yours sincerely

Alan Jarvis

Lead inspector

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