

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110478
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337511
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Rogers
Headteacher	Angela Gavin
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2008
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Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. □ Inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by eight teachers. They also saw sounds and letters lessons led by a number of teachers and teaching assistants. Inspectors also visited sessions in the pre-school and the clubs taking place before and after school. Meetings were held with governors, a number of school leaders and a group of pupils. Inspectors looked at school documentation, including the school improvement plan, policies related to the safeguarding of children and information about pupils' progress. They also took into account the views of staff and 81 parents and carers expressed in their responses to questionnaires. □ □

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

- the extent to which pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills in different contexts enabling them to achieve well
- the reasons why girls appear to be outperforming boys
- the extent to which pupils understand what they are learning and how to improve their work
- the contribution of leaders at all levels in raising achievement and improving teaching and learning.

Information about the school

Pupils attending this average-sized infant school come from a wide area and few are in the immediate vicinity of the school. Most are of White British heritage, although an increasing minority are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Many of these are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased significantly and is now above average. Most of these pupils have social, language and communication difficulties. □ The school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in its pre-school and pre-Reception class as well as its two Reception classes. The school also has before- and after-school clubs, which include children from the neighbouring junior school. All of this extended provision is now under the management of the governing body and was part of this inspection.

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

2

Main findings

This is an outstanding school which is held in high regard by parents and carers. Good at its last inspection, it has continued to improve under the clear and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, her deputy headteacher and the dedicated staff team. At the heart of its work is a caring and nurturing environment where children are welcomed and valued whatever their background or needs. Pupils thrive in this supportive atmosphere and feel safe and secure. Their moral, social, cultural and especially their spiritual development is outstanding as well as their academic achievement. One parent commented that, 'St Joseph's has provided a safe and caring learning environment for each of our three children. Each child is treated as an individual and made to feel special.' This was typical of the many positive comments received by inspectors and illustrates the school's highly effective engagement with its parents and carers.

The school has developed its pre-school into an outstanding resource over the last two years where children quickly become confident and eager learners and get off to a flying start to their education. They continue to make good progress through the good provision in the Reception classes and Years 1 and 2. By the time they leave, their attainment is high, particularly in reading and mathematics, representing good progress from often low starting points. □ Pupils do well because of good teaching and an extremely lively and interesting curriculum which enables them to make good progress in basic skills and to learn in increasingly creative ways. They particularly enjoy the many additional activities they take part in, for example in sport and music, which contribute very well to their enjoyment of their education. Indeed, music plays an important part in the life of the school and pupils' singing is a delight! By the time they move on to junior school, their very well-developed basic skills, good attitudes to learning and above-average attendance mean that they are extremely well prepared for the junior school.

□ The headteacher, staff and governors are proud of their school and have built on its many strengths since the last inspection. High levels of care and attainment have been maintained and the increasing diversity of the school community is celebrated. The school engages in a number of highly fruitful partnerships which considerably enhance pupils' welfare and curriculum opportunities. □ At the same time, leaders are not complacent and seek improvement whenever weaknesses are identified through accurate self-evaluation. For example, the opportunity to develop the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been embraced since the pre-school became an integral part of the school community. A systematic approach to teaching reading and writing has been very effective in securing basic skills, particularly for the increasing numbers of children at the early stages of learning English. These improvements

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illustrate the ambition of senior leaders. Middle leaders are knowledgeable and enthusiastic but their roles in monitoring and evaluating the school's work are underdeveloped. Moreover, the school's plans for improvement are not always clear about how the impact of its actions will be measured. Nevertheless, the success of the school in securing further improvements from the last inspection indicates that it has a good capacity to sustain the high level of its performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the school's capacity to sustain its improvement through:
 - developing the role of middle leaders in sustaining pupils' levels of achievement and improving teaching and learning
 - ensure that the school's plans for improvement enable leaders and governors to measure clearly the impact of actions on outcomes for pupils.

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

Pupils really enjoy their learning and generally apply themselves well in lessons. They are able to sustain concentration well when engaged in completing tasks. For example, in a Year 2 English lesson, pupils applied themselves diligently to writing their versions of 'The Secret Garden'. They enjoyed the tasks and produced some lively and interesting writing. Pupils' attainment in writing remains above average but has fallen over the last two years, mainly because the school's changing intake means that writing levels are lower when children leave the Reception classes. Nevertheless, they continue to make good progress and enjoy writing for a range of audiences and purposes.

The school's carefully tailored support strategies ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress. Those with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities become confident learners and make as much progress as their peers. The increasing proportion of pupils who are learning English are helped to acquire the language quickly and progress well thereafter. In recent years, the performance of boys has lagged behind that of girls, notably in writing, but the gap has closed significantly.

□ Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. They generally cooperate well in pairs and groups, although some find it difficult to listen to one another. In a few lessons, some boys, in particular, become distracted when they are asked to sit for too long without active participation. There are good levels of participation in the school's sporting activities, which contributes to pupils' good understanding and adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils take a pride in their school and take their responsibilities as school councillors, for example, very seriously.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The school's exemplary care of its pupils is evident in the warm and caring relationships between adults and pupils and with parents and carers. This was summed up by one parent who commented, 'The staff care about the pupils, are there for them in every way and support them when needed.' This typified the views expressed and a number cited very personal examples of how the school had supported their children and families through difficult times. There are good levels of support for potentially vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those new to English. The effective team of teaching assistants, in particular, make a very good contribution to the education of these pupils and this enables them to play a full part in the life of the school and to do well. The school's provision is further enhanced by the warm and friendly breakfast and after-school clubs which pupils really enjoy. □

□ Teachers plan well to meet the different needs of their pupils. Pupils with particular gifts and talents are provided with additional challenges to enable them to excel. Teachers use a range of strategies to engage and motivate learners: for example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson related to time, some pupils enjoyed a 'bingo' game which consolidated their understanding while others responded well to a series of problems. The creative curriculum uses information and communication technology well and is helping pupils to see how different aspects of their learning fit together. It is also providing them with more opportunities to write in different contexts. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long and pupils do not have enough opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning. Assessment has improved since the last inspection and pupils have a clear view of what they are learning and how to improve, through targets for

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example. The curriculum is considerably enriched through visits and visitors and the high quality of specialist teaching in music in particular.

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 has led the school effectively over many years and secured the unanimous support of all members of staff. The welfare of every child is central to the school aims and one teacher, representing the views of other staff members, commented, 'I feel privileged to be part of a staff team who put a priority on the immediate needs of the children.' The school's high expectations are reflected in the excellent levels of care and the consistent meeting or exceeding of challenging academic targets. Some middle leaders are new to their roles and have not had the opportunity to contribute significantly to monitoring or school improvement. Governors are experienced and knowledgeable and offer a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders. The vision of leaders and governors is evident in an ambitious building programme, which has enabled them to create an excellent pre-school setting which is providing very firm foundations for children's future learning. □

□ There are robust procedures in place to ensure that all children are properly safeguarded. The school is very inclusive and is highly effective in promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination. This is evident in the school's policies and procedures and in its everyday life. School leaders carefully track the progress of different groups of learners and act quickly to deal with any apparent inequalities. For example, effective action has been taken to close the gap between the attainment of boys and girls. The school is a very harmonious community and celebrates the diversity of its population. It promotes community cohesion well at the local level and has begun to implement plans to develop the national and international dimensions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the pre-school, their skills and understanding are below expectations for their age overall and are often low in aspects of their social development and communication and language skills. Increasing numbers are at the early stages of learning English. Since taking over control of the pre-school, leaders have transformed the setting into a vibrant and interesting learning environment where children learn very effectively and develop good social skills in a range of play situations through the skilful promptings of staff. Currently, these social skills are not being consolidated sufficiently well in the pre-Reception class where routines are not clearly established to enable children to make the most of their learning opportunities. Children enjoy their time in the Reception classes, where they experience a good balance of activities led by adults and opportunities to explore the world around them. The more systematic programme for developing reading and writing skills used in the rest of the school is now employed in Reception, with a positive impact on the development of early reading and writing skills. Very good use is made of the improved and stimulating outdoor area to promote pupils' skills and understanding in all areas of their learning. Staff support children well with good questioning, for example when the teacher helped children to understand the factors which helped or hindered the roll of a ball down a slope. Staff work effectively together and assess children's progress carefully, using this information well to plan for future learning. By the time they move into Year 1, children's attainment is broadly average, which represents good progress from their often low starting points. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led by the deputy headteacher, who has instigated a number of improvements since taking over in September, particularly in relation to developing outdoor provision in the Reception classes.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the school, with the vast majority strongly agreeing with every statement. All believe their children to be safe at school and only one was unhappy with their child's overall experience. Those that added comments tended to commend the high levels of care and support provided by the staff as well as high standards of education. Inspectors' findings agree with all these positive comments. A very few responses expressed concerns about pupils' progress and the information provided. Inspectors found that all groups of pupils make good progress and that a great deal of information is provided about pupils' progress. A number of responses also indicate that the school was very responsive to any concerns or requests that parents and carers might have.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 217 pupils registered at the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Catholic Infant 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.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	77	17	21	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	86	10	12	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	60	29	36	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	62	28	35	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	56	69	21	26	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	55	68	24	30	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	70	21	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)	50	62	24	30	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	59	28	35	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	53	33	41	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	62	26	32	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	63	78	15	19	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	83	12	15	1	1	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.



18 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, Aylesbury HP21 7JF

You may remember that I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. 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 and carers are right to be proud of your school because it is outstanding. You get off to a very good start in the pre-school and make good progress as you move through the school. This is because teachers and other staff work hard to help you to do as well as you can. Those of you who are learning English or find things a bit more challenging get lots of help. By the time you move on to junior school, you are doing very well in mathematics, reading and writing.

You told us how much you enjoy school and we saw this in your lessons. Most of you work hard and always try your best. Well done! A few of you need to listen a bit more carefully to each other and your teachers. You really like the extra things you have to do in sport and music and we really liked your singing! We were also very impressed with the assembly led by the Year 1 children.

Your headteacher has led the school very well for many years and she gets lots of help from all the other staff. They are keen to make things even better for you. We have asked them to do one thing that we think will help.

- We have asked the school to make sure that all the staff in the school who are in charge of things get lots of chances to make sure that things continue to go well for you.

Wishing you all the best in the future,

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector

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