

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112335
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337906
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	David Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin McNicholas
Headteacher	Miss Teresa Readman
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seven lessons were observed, taught by five different teachers and teaching assistants in their classrooms. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a local authority representative. Approximately half the inspection time was spent looking at learning, including the pupils' work and behaviour. Inspectors looked at school documentation, the school improvement plan, the assessment and progress records of the pupils, safeguarding documents and curriculum plans. The views of parents and carers were considered as represented in 28 questionnaires.

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

- the achievement and progress of pupils
- the consistency in the quality of teaching and whether variations influence pupils' performance in aspects of English and science
- the quality of the curriculum and its impact on learning
- the impact of the school's community cohesion strategies on pupils' attitudes.

Information about the school

This is a small school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin and a few speak English as an additional language. An average percentage is identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion taking free school meals is below average. The school has gained Healthy School Status and has an Activemark. There is a privately run nursery on site which is inspected separately by Ofsted.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Josephs is a good school that successfully achieves its motto of being a 'truly friendly, caring school'.

Pupils enjoy learning because teaching is good and attracts their interests. This is an important factor in why their behaviour is outstanding. After a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, progress accelerates and pupils do well academically, achieve well and secure positive attitudes to learning.

Since the last inspection, the school has made good strides. The school has an accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses, although it does not fully record the outcomes of its evaluations. It recognises where more needs to be done and is taking the steps required to deal with this. School improvement planning has improved and gives a clear way forward for the school's development. The members of the strong management team share the same philosophy and vision for the school's progress. The team benefits from working alongside a good and supportive governing body. Staff are dedicated and willing to learn from others through effective professional development and liaison with other schools. These strengths give the school a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils are highly valued within the local community and make good contributions to it. They raise many funds to help others and excellent links with the local community, including the Catholic parish, enhance the lives of pupils and parents and carers alike. Good partnerships with other schools benefit pupils' learning significantly. The curriculum provides for the needs of pupils but does not give enough attention to widening pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own. This reduces the school's contribution to community cohesion. Curriculum planning does not yet exploit links between subjects to enable pupils to apply their good basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) in a variety of situations. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop good personal skills but do not have enough opportunities to become independent in their learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise progress and achievement by:
 - developing the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children become more independent in their learning
 - refining the curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that pupils are able to apply their basic skills to a wider range of subjects and educational experiences.

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- Improve the school's contribution to community cohesion by:
 - devising an action plan to widen the pupils' understanding of the cultural richness and diversity of society both within the United Kingdom and abroad
 - establishing systems to monitor the effectiveness of such plans on pupils' attitudes and knowledge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils make good progress in lessons and their behaviour is outstanding. They enjoy school and thrive on new experiences. Positive responses are particularly evident to practical work, for example when Year 4 pupils explored the permeability of three different soil samples. A good work ethic pervades lessons: pupils are conscientious and set themselves high standards, notably upper Key Stage 2 pupils in the presentation of their work. Pupils act safely, say that they feel secure in school and demonstrate a good understanding of the choices required to be healthy. Pupils work well together in pairs and teams and develop positive and lasting friendships with others. Many enjoy participating in sport and all enjoy the start-of-day 'Freddy Fit' activities and the good range of outdoor play facilities. Pupils are keen to take responsibility and make a very strong contribution to their own school and the local area. They are closely involved in their local community but only have a limited knowledge of the diversity of society within the United Kingdom and beyond.

Work in the pupils' books and the school's own tracking data confirm that the majority of pupils are learning at a good rate and develop good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average skills. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress and some make good progress as they move through Key Stage 1. Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 because of consistently good teaching and given the pupils' starting points in English, mathematics and science, their achievement is good. Challenging school targets are set and usually met. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates because of good support from teachers and teaching assistants.

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

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The overall good quality of teaching is the most significant factor in the pupils' good progress. Lessons are well organised and presented in a way that interests pupils and maintains their attention. Teachers use assessment effectively to plan work that usually matches the individual pupils' needs. Explanations are clear and work is organised well to extend existing skills and knowledge. In a few lessons, where the pace of learning is slower, pupils are over directed and not able to make their own decisions and manage their own learning as effectively. There is a consistent approach to marking which involves setting targets for pupils. This gives pupils a clear picture about how to improve.

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science but its overall provision lacks flair and imagination. Curriculum planning does not take enough advantage of exploring links between subjects, and has some way to go to secure a vibrant and exciting learning culture. The school recognises this and is responding. Close and productive links with other schools enhance learning, for example in French and sport. Educational visits widen pupils' experiences.

The comment of one pupil typifies the views of many pupils, 'the school really helps us, especially in difficult situations!' Parents and carers also have a high regard for the care their children receive. Staff know pupils well and, consequently, are able to give them good levels of emotional, personal and academic support and guidance. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given good support and talented pupils access a range of opportunities to develop academically, for example in ICT and mathematics.

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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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff are involved in monitoring the school's work as well as leading curriculum developments, for example in writing plans and developing outdoor learning. The tracking system for monitoring pupils' progress is working well and is embedded in the work of the school. It makes sure that any pupils falling behind are picked out and given support. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They monitor its work well and contribute much to school improvement. The school has good communications with parents and carers through, for example, a detailed newsletter and ensures they are given opportunities to get involved in their children's education.

The school makes a significant contribution to cohesion in the local community but does not have a clear strategy for developing pupils' understanding of communities further afield or for monitoring the pupils' development in this regard. Good safeguarding procedures make sure that pupils and adults are safe and secure. The school promotes equal opportunities effectively and ensures that pupils achieve well given their starting points. Resources are managed well to get good value. Very supportive parents and carers work hard to generate funds which help the school's tight budget.

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
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with skills that are generally typical for their age. Some need additional support emotionally, but many have a good vocabulary and a relatively good knowledge and understanding of the world. Progress is satisfactory and pupils start Year 1 with good levels of personal development and average attainment. Despite visionary leadership, shortcomings in the accommodation remain and children do not have enough opportunities to become independent and take full benefit of learning outdoors. Staff ensure that children are well cared for and looked after, and the needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met. Records and assessments of all children are underpinned by the good knowledge that staff have of each child. Recent initiatives such as the children's individual 'Learning Journals' are recording the range of activities experienced and enhancing the information about the development of each child. Before children start Reception, good links are made with parents and carers, often through excellent links with the on site school nursery. Parents and carers are very supportive of the way that the school helps their children to settle in to school life.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Virtually all parents and carers support the school and applaud the quality of education provided. They feel that their children are happy, make good progress and are well cared for and looked after. The quality of teaching is praised and learning is said to be fun. Mild concern was expressed by a very small minority about occasional incidents of misbehaviour in school. Inspection findings support the positive picture reported by parents and carers and note that if misbehaviour occurs, it is rare and there are good systems in place to deal with it. Importantly, virtually all pupils say they feel safe and secure and that misbehaviour is very rare.

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 Primary 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 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 61 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	68	9	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	50	13	46	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	61	10	36	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	54	12	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	57	11	39	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	64	9	32	1	4	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)	21	75	4	14	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	68	7	25	2	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	46	12	43	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	54	11	39	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	64	8	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	71	6	21	2	7	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.



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Cockermouth, CA13 0DG

Thank you for sharing time with me during your school's recent inspection. Your school is good. I am very impressed by your behaviour and how well you all get on together. I noticed that most of the time you enjoy lessons and seem to work hard and try to do your best. You told me that you feel safe in school and that is the case. It is safe and secure. Your knowledge of what to do to stay healthy and safe is good and is an important part of giving you a chance of a happy life in future.

You all seem to do well in your learning but I feel more can be done to help the younger ones in the Reception class. I have asked the school to develop better ways of helping them to be more independent in their learning. Although you develop a good knowledge of your local community, more needs to be done to widen your understanding of the wider society of the United Kingdom and beyond. This is an action point I have given the school which you may enjoy getting involved in.

You are all very caring and benefit from being taught by very caring adults. The way you raise funds for others is impressive and your ability to contribute to the running of the school as school councillors and helpers shows how mature you are. You are fortunate to have lots of activities that are out of the ordinary in lessons. These clearly make school more fun. It could be even better if you had more chances to apply your skills of reading, writing, mathematics, and information and communication technology to topics and themes.

Please thank your parents and carers for returning their questionnaires which showed good support for the school. I send you all my best wishes for the future and hope you all stay fit and healthy and make the best of all that school offers.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Byrne

Lead inspector

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