

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113491
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	338184
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms J Soper
Headteacher	Brendan Gill
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They saw seven lessons and four teachers and held meetings with parents and carers, staff, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessment records, plans, policies and 33 parental and carer questionnaires.

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

- whether higher attainment in 2009 has been maintained
- how consistent is the teaching and the level of challenge it provides to pupils
- how well pupils understand their standards and the next steps in their learning
- how well governors monitor the school and challenge it.

Information about the school

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is smaller than average. It has a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities; the largest group of these pupils has moderate learning difficulties. The school has a larger-than-usual turnover of pupils.

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 Joseph's is a good school where pupils thrive in its caring ethos. Pupils are happy at school, get on very well with their friends and adults and are confident that they are safe. One reported, 'no-one in the school has experienced bullying' and his friends agreed. They appreciate the benefits of a small school where everyone knows one another and realise they are well cared for, one reporting, 'Teachers always listen to you and, if you have a problem, they help you.' These strengths mean that pupils' personal development is good.

Parents and carers, also, hold positive views about the school and express few significant concerns. One typical response was, 'This is a happy welcoming school where each child can reach their full potential.'

Pupils make a sound start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage and develop good learning habits. Satisfactory progress in the Reception Year is largely because teaching lacks much of the challenge and stimulation seen higher up the school. Progress accelerates in Years 1 to 6, promoted by generally lively and well-focused lessons, pupils' invariably good behaviour and their great willingness to learn. Occasionally, progress can be held back by less dynamic teaching. Attainment at the end of Year 6 fluctuates annually but is usually average. Good support for pupils with moderate learning difficulties enables them to progress as well as their peers. Given their starting points and the relatively high proportion of pupils joining the school mid-way through their education, many of whom experience barriers to learning, the achievement of all groups of pupils is good.

Marking of pupils' work is often very helpful and pupils appreciate the constructive comments. Assessment procedures have improved and assessments provide a better picture of each pupil's progress over a year. However, assessment information is not gathered frequently enough in order to be able to intervene quickly if learning slows. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, records are not always accurate and do not summarise progress well enough.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and its plans for the future are developing a sharper focus on raising attainment. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school, have a clear picture of its characteristics and drive improvements well. Leaders monitor lessons and address less effective elements in teaching, but this can sometimes lack rigour. Systems to enable continuing improvement are securely in place and issues raised in the previous inspection, such as providing pupils with better academic advice, have been addressed effectively. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By summer 2011, raise attainment by:
 - assessing pupils more frequently to identify where progress may be slower and act on this information
 - monitoring teaching and learning with greater rigour to identify and improve less effective teaching.
- By January 2011, improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making teaching more engaging and challenging
 - developing assessment so that it provides a clearer picture of each child's progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enter Year 1 with the expected levels of attainment, ready to learn because they have developed good classroom habits in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment on entry varies year on year and the composition of groups changes with the high turnover of pupils. Despite some inconsistencies in teaching, progress over the following six years is good, promoted particularly by the good curriculum and pupils' receptiveness to learning. Pupils joining the school mid-way through their education are helped to settle in very well. Very effective lessons, such as in Years 5 and 6 where pupils enjoyed working on complex calculations inspired by real events and historical figures, enthuse pupils and lead to good progress. Lower expectations in a minority of lessons mean that, occasionally, pupils are not challenged to learn as well as they should.

Teaching assistants support pupils with moderate learning and other difficulties fully and this helps to ensure their progress is similar to their peers. Differences between the progress of different groups are minimal.

St Joseph's is a happy school where good behaviour is the norm and relationships between pupils and with adults are often excellent. Pupils, confidently, report they feel secure on the school site and that bullying is almost unknown. They feel safe because they know there are many friendly adults they can turn to and because they have been briefed well on the potential dangers of areas like the internet and in travelling to and from school. Their understanding of what it takes to grow up healthily is developed by the healthy options available at lunchtime, the opportunities they have to grow produce on the school allotment and numerous chances to take part in exercise, both during and after the school day.

The school council provides a lively forum for pupils' views to be heard and acted upon. Funds are raised for worthwhile school causes, like play equipment and for charitable appeals, such as the Haitian earthquake. Older pupils like the responsibilities they are given, particularly enjoying 'buddying' the youngest children. Few opportunities exist for pupils to develop an understanding of the wider world of work, so pupils' progress in developing skills useful to their economic future is only satisfactory. Attendance is close

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to the national average. Spiritual opportunities for pupils are numerous and planned for well, so their development in this area is good. The highly positive ethos of the school is a good testament to pupils' strong moral and social understanding and the school is beginning to provide opportunities to introduce pupils to other cultures within the United Kingdom.

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	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum provides imaginative and effective opportunities to learn. Teachers are beginning to link subjects to inject added interest, such as discussing moral dilemmas when producing original drama and writing. Exciting experiences, such as trips to theatres and arts projects, promote a love of learning and provide interesting contexts for teachers to build on when planning lessons. Links with a French school and a visit to France have benefited the learning of French across the school. Numerous sports and other activities brighten up the end of the day and pupils are very keen on the wide-ranging opportunities offered, from football and table tennis, to drama and guitar lessons. They attend in large numbers.

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 are ready learners, receptive to what they are told and well behaved. Their enjoyment of learning means progress in lessons is usually good and never less than satisfactory, even when teaching is less engaging. Much teaching is good. There is, frequently, a keen focus on learning, with constant reminders of learning objectives, perceptive questioning and effective planning that ensures all groups are kept at full stretch throughout the lesson. Teaching assistants are skilled and sympathetic. They know pupils well, subtly supporting those with behavioural and learning difficulties so that they are able to participate fully in all elements of lessons.

Occasionally, teaching is insufficiently ambitious, concentrating on planning activities rather than actions that promote learning. A Years 3 and 4 art lesson, on the interesting idea of painting a picture of a tiger, was aimed at 'the middle' and failed to provide challenges for the more talented, despite pupils' sterling efforts. Assessment of pupils' work can be very good, with effective marking ripe with suggestions on how to improve, usually followed by pupils' positive reactions. Older pupils have group targets, but marking does not always refer to these. Pupils are formally assessed twice a year, in order to track their progress. However, this is not frequent enough to provide more timely early intervention if individuals are found to be falling behind.

The school knows its pupils well, nurtures them effectively and acts decisively to support those facing difficulties, a fact that pupils appreciate. It targets support to those most in need and its actions have often improved the behaviour and attitudes displayed by individuals. Pupils with moderate learning and other difficulties have effective personal plans and are well supported and so they make good progress. Good links with secondary schools enable pupils to transfer smoothly between Years 6 and 7.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, regularly, monitors teaching and leaders have acted to develop better classroom practice, which has improved the quality of teaching overall. However, the monitoring of marking and planning in order to ensure all lessons are sufficiently challenging is less thorough. The school development priorities focus heavily on improving elements of the curriculum and each priority has clear lines of responsibility. Plans and priorities for next year are, appropriately, targeted towards raising attainment through better teaching.

Assessment has improved and provides a broad picture of the rate of pupils' progress.

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This information is used to hold staff to account and identify where training may be required. It also enables the school to evaluate the progress of different groups of pupils and act on the outcomes, so that equality of opportunity is good. Expectations are high enough to bring about a positive ethos in the school and pupils' good care and personal development. The school's ambition means that outcomes for pupils are good.

The governing body is increasingly knowledgeable about the school. Governors monitor the school's work regularly and are starting to analyse achievement data. Their growing confidence and competence promote constructive relationships with staff and pupils and help governors to challenge the school when required. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities for safeguarding appropriately. Safeguarding is satisfactory. Staff are sufficiently trained and do good work to raise pupils' awareness of how to stay safe in various circumstances. Arrangements and policies meet government requirements.

An impressive range of partnerships contributes strongly to the curriculum and pupils' personal development. The striking range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment is available largely because of links with the Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership and a close association with a local technology specialist high school. Splendid opportunities in the arts and sport are promoted by links with, for example, national projects and local football clubs. The school has very positive relationships with most parents and carers and, regularly, seeks their views through questionnaires. The parental support officer is invariably at the school gate to greet parents and carers and listen to their views and concerns. Good information flows into and out of the school so parents and carers know about school events and successes. They appreciate that there is always a friendly member of staff available at the start and end of the day.

The school has very recently audited its community cohesion offering. It has, correctly, identified strengths in the close association with the local community, particularly through the church. The school is a cohesive community but links further afield are largely embryonic, although early contacts with schools in a contrasting part of the United Kingdom, France and the Gambia have great potential to broaden pupils' perspectives on the wider world.

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

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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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

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	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents' and carers' views of the school are strongly favourable. A very large majority of those responding to the inspection questionnaire were happy with their children's experience of the school. A few expressed concerns about whether the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection finds that behaviour is good and any minor disturbances are well managed.

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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 110 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	64	11	33	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	76	7	21	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	67	10	30	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	70	8	24	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	21	64	10	30	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	48	15	45	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	58	13	39	0	0	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)	18	55	12	36	1	3	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	58	12	36	2	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	58	9	27	2	6	2	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	64	8	24	3	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	67	6	18	3	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	82	4	12	1	3	1	3

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.



9 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Plymouth, PL1 4DJ

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors when we visited your school. It was good to meet such mature young people. We were impressed with how much you enjoy school and your behaviour, well done! We hope you can keep up your great enthusiasm for everything about the school.

St Joseph's provides a good education. Good teaching and your keenness to learn mean that you make good progress, although it is not so rapid in the Reception class. By the time you leave school, your attainment is similar to other boys and girls across the country. We know you appreciate how well you are cared for because you told us.

We have asked the school to concentrate on:

- improving your standards by checking up on your progress more often to see if there are any problems and by checking up that all teaching is as good as in the best lessons
- improving the Early Years by making teaching more lively and by checking up and recording progress more thoroughly.

Once again, thank you for all your help, it was great meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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