

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115152
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338519
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David O'Halloran
Headteacher	Paul Collingwood
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2007
School address	Vaagen Road Canvey Island Essex
Telephone number	01268 683903
Fax number	01268 515843
Email address	admin@st-josephsrc.essex.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time observing learning, visiting seven teachers and 19 lessons altogether. They met with a governor, staff and pupils, looked at a range of school policies and plans, records of pupils' progress and the 120 questionnaires submitted by parents and carers.

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

- the achievement of more able pupils in mathematics and science at Key Stage 2
- the achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of subject leaders on pupils' achievement.

Information about the school

Pupils come from a wide area to attend this school. Most are from White British backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. Fewer pupils are entitled to free school meals than is typical in a school of this size. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average although varies widely in each year group. In some year groups, it is well above average. Those pupils who are identified often have moderate learning difficulties. The school has won a number of awards in recent years including the Activemark and Healthy Schools.

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

Pupils achieve well at St Joseph's because they are well taught and receive extremely high levels of individual care and support. One pupil said, 'The teachers really care about us - they would never leave us behind.' They develop strong moral and social values and high levels of confidence. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, recently gained first and third places in a public speaking competition amongst local schools.

Excellent partnerships with community groups, local and further afield, add much to pupils' experience of school. Productive links with the parish support pupils' deep sense of spirituality. Teachers from local secondary schools and peripatetic tutors provide specialist tuition in music and sport, in which pupils achieve high standards.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with moderate learning difficulties, thrive at St Joseph's and achieve extremely well. They receive excellent support from the specialist teacher and assistant, who help them take a full part in the curriculum and in school life generally. Most such pupils gain nationally expected levels by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6.

Teachers show a good commitment towards improving their own practice and supporting their colleagues. Science teaching is improving and is now good because of effective input from the coordinator. She has implemented a range of ideas gained from attending various courses. This is in turn impacting on pupils' achievement in science, with more reaching level 5 in the national tests in Year 6.

All pupils, including those who are more able, make good progress and reach above average levels in the national tests and assessments. Standards in English are exceptionally high because of the school's successful focus on improving pupils' writing skills. Pupils in Year 6 for example, considered the features of 'atmospheric stories,' keenly exchanging their ideas before writing a story of their own. Pupils throughout the school show extremely positive attitudes to learning, engaging well in activities and always trying their best.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress. They participate readily in the activities that are provided for them, work well together and develop good levels of independence. The activities led by the teacher are successful in promoting basic reading, writing and mathematical skills but the activities on offer, for children to choose for themselves, often lack interest and excitement. The use of the outdoor area is not planned well enough to support children's learning in all areas of their development.

Well organised monitoring and evaluation processes mean that senior staff have a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are supportive of the

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school but lack well organised systems to monitor the school's work and evaluate its performance. They are aware of this and have recently begun to improve procedures to help them gain a better overview. Their obvious commitment towards improving their roles, coupled with the good direction provided by the headteacher and senior staff, mean that the school is well placed to continue to improve in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that activities that children choose for themselves are more stimulating and challenge them successfully in all areas of their learning
 - using the outdoor area more effectively to promote learning in all aspects of children's development.
 - Extend governors' evaluation systems to ensure they gain a full picture of school performance so they can take a more active role in planning for school improvement.

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

Pupils are extremely polite and well behaved. In assembly for example, they sit quietly, listening to the music as each class enters the hall. Unprompted, they make room for one another to sit down. They work well with one another in lessons and play happily together in the playground. They are quick to support each other if there is a problem. When one pupil stumbled, for example, there were several on hand to help them. They have a clear understanding of what to do if bullying occurs although they say this happens rarely. All of the pupils who responded to the questionnaire issued before the inspection, say they feel very safe in school. They know that the adults are there to help them if they have a problem. The school's work to gain the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards mean they know the importance of healthy lifestyles and keenly adopt them. Many enjoy nutritious school lunches and a significant proportion participates in after-school sports clubs.

Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They carry out their roles as school councillors conscientiously, raise considerable funds for charities at home and abroad and provide excellent support for the local hospice. Attendance is average and punctuality is good. Pupils' thirst for learning, their good levels of basic literacy and numeracy, and positive contribution to the community mean they are well prepared for the future.

In lessons pupils are extremely attentive. Girls, boys and pupils of different ethnicities all do well. Work in their books show that all of the pupils are making good progress. Pupils know how well they are doing because teachers provide good feedback about their work, both orally and in their books. They know their targets and what they have to do to achieve them. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson for example, the teacher set out clear expectations of what pupils had to achieve. They worked diligently, investigating

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reflective symmetry in regular polygons. More able pupils responded well to the high levels of challenge offered, discussing their ideas with one another, using correct mathematical language.

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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum focuses strongly on developing pupils' personal and social skills and helping them to achieve secure literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils. They manage them well and there is seldom any disruption in lessons. They maintain pupils' attention well through the use of a wide range of strategies, such as effective questioning and paired discussion. Lessons are well planned and move at a good pace. Activities are set at different levels in English, mathematics and science to make sure that all pupils, including those with moderate learning difficulties and those who are more able, make good progress. Teaching assistants often make a useful contribution, teaching small groups daily which are geared closely to pupils' needs and abilities. Lessons are usually presented in a way that captures pupils' interest and concentration

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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although occasionally pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than doing things for themselves.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are very engaged in their learning. They love the wide range of the after-school clubs, for example, street dancing, Spanish and circus skills provided to extend their experience. They enjoy visits by the county librarian, police and fire services, the Rotary Club and water authority. Visits to theatres, museums, the town planning office and nature reserve all help to make learning fun. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from workshops, in local colleges, which help them develop their skills to high levels. The school has identified the need to strengthen the curriculum further by planning more distinct links between subjects, to engage pupils' imagination and creativity and make learning more meaningful.

There are very effective systems in place to ensure pupils' safety and to provide high levels of care and support for individual pupils. The headteacher knows children and families well, and is always on hand at the school gate at the start and end of the day to respond to concerns or offer encouragement and support. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are delighted with the school's efforts to support their children. 'Staff at the school have listened and helped me in every way they can,' wrote one parent, 'They have been a great support.' These pupils are very involved in directing and monitoring their own learning, using a child-friendly plan devised by the coordinator.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides a clear direction for school improvement. Subject coordinators have improved their roles well since the last inspection and now play an important part in the evaluation process. Data, about pupils' achievements, is analysed carefully to identify any gaps in the curriculum and to identify pupils at risk of underachievement. Prompt action is taken to ensure that these pupils receive the right support to help them catch up.

The school's strong Catholic ethos contributes significantly to its work in promoting community cohesion within the school and local area. Well established links with a school in Malawi help children to appreciate what life is like for pupils outside their immediate surroundings. Parents and carers support the school strongly. One, echoing the sentiments of many, wrote, 'I am more than satisfied with this school - it is well run

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and has a great atmosphere.'

Procedures to ensure safeguarding are robust, regularly reviewed and evident in all aspects of the school's work. There are clear procedures for ensuring the safety of children, backed up by regular training for the staff. New staff are carefully vetted to ensure their suitability. Staff promote equality of opportunity extremely well, ensuring that all pupils, whatever their background or needs, make rapid progress. Racial harmony is strong because the school is extremely prompt in tackling any incidents of discrimination, even though these are rare. A range of new developments is helping to improve governors' understanding of the school's work. Governors are invited to attend school on one morning each term, for example, to join pupils and staff for mass, visit classes and learn about different areas of school improvement. They do not yet, however, make a strong enough contribution to evaluating school performance and planning for the future.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good induction procedures ensure that children feel safe, settle quickly and develop their self-confidence. They develop a good understanding of healthy living and follow routines, which promote good hygiene practices. For example, unprompted by adults, they washed their hands after coming in from outside play.

Most children enter Reception at levels that are broadly typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress and the majority reach levels that are in line with national expectations by the end of the year. Children communicate their ideas well, begin to

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learn their letters and sounds and develop a basic understanding of numbers and shapes. They write their names on the board when they are going outside to play on the bicycles and scooters. They enjoy pretending to be shopkeepers and customers in the 'Toy Shop,' and keenly count out the coins in exchange for various toys. Activities that are led by adults are successful in promoting children's basic skills but those organised to help them learn independently often lack a clear purpose. Children use the outdoor area mainly for physical play. There are not enough opportunities planned for them to develop in other aspects of their learning.

A good start has been made by the new teacher to implement reliable assessment systems, which are beginning to help build a broad picture of children's progress in different areas of their development. This information is beginning to be used to plan appropriately to meet children's individual needs.

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 were extremely positive in their responses to the questionnaire. They were pleased with virtually all aspects of the school's work, most especially the way in which the school keeps their children safe. A few expressed concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour but inspectors found that systems to address this are comprehensive and working well.

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 120 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 206 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	66	39	33	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	86	72	34	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	76	63	43	36	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	59	42	35	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	82	68	37	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	64	41	34	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	74	62	43	36	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)	66	55	48	40	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	60	43	36	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	46	57	48	3	3	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	52	51	43	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	85	71	31	26	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	70	33	28	2	2	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, Essex, SS8 9DP

Thank you so much for welcoming us to St Joseph's recently and telling us your opinions about your school. Your views, together with everything else that we saw, helped us form a clear view about how well your school works. This is what we found.

Your school is giving you a good education which is preparing you well for the future.

Your school keeps you very safe. All the adults take very good care of you.

You understand what it means to be healthy and many pupils take part in sports clubs after school.

You are happy in your school and support and respect each other well.

Your behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school.

You are all keen to do your best.

Teaching is good and you make good progress

Children in Reception settle quickly and enjoy school but some of the activities could be more exciting so that they make faster progress in their learning and development.

The school governors have begun to visit more frequently to find out how well things are going. We think this is a good idea and that they should keep an even more careful check on what is happening in school so they can help the headteacher and teachers plan for the future.

You can play your part in helping your school become even better by making sure you continue to work hard, behave well and attend school every day.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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