

St Joseph Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117465
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379425
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2012
Lead inspector	Joy Considine

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Ramsden
Headteacher	Linda Payne
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2007
School address	Ainsdale Road South Oxhey Watford WD19 7DW
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Joy Considine

Additional inspector

Sara Wakefield

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 16 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers. They listened to pupils read and they scrutinised their work. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff, and parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at school development plans, pupils' assessment and tracking information and other documentation relating to the inspection, including that regarding safeguarding. They analysed the responses to questionnaires received from 105 parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Joseph is about the same size as the average primary school. About two thirds of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and the others are from a variety of heritages with an average number who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than usual. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average. The school meets the government's current floor standards for academic performance. Among its awards, the school has Basic Skills, Eco Schools and Healthy Schools status. Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to the teaching team.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school, which has made improvements in key areas of its work since the previous inspection and is well placed to improve further. The school is highly inclusive and places pupils' achievement and well-being at the heart of what it does. It is not yet outstanding because there is not enough teaching at the highest level to ensure that pupils' achievement is outstanding, and a small minority of pupils are absent too often.
- Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics throughout the school, and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 their attainment in English and mathematics is above average. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because they receive well-targeted support to help them to overcome their difficulties.
- Teaching is good overall. Pupils learn well because teaching is usually lively and engaging and teachers provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to speak and discuss their learning. Although teachers ask pupils questions to assess their understanding, they do not all ask enough questions that probe their thinking or challenge them at higher levels.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, and behave well in lessons and around the school. Safeguarding is given high priority and there are good systems to ensure that pupils are safe. The school has worked hard to improve attendance but it is no better than satisfactory because a small number of parents and carers do not ensure that their children attend school regularly.
- The school's ambitious leaders provide a clear educational direction to ensure that pupils achieve well. The effective leadership of teaching is supported by a robust programme of monitoring and professional development, allied to performance management.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by July 2013 by:
 - making pupils more aware of what they need to do to improve the quality of their work and by consistently giving them opportunities to respond to teachers' marking
 - developing teachers' questioning skills so that they probe pupils' understanding and increase their learning.
- Work more closely with parents and carers to intensify efforts to raise levels of attendance.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning, particularly in language and literacy. This is due to the strong emphasis on developing their communication skills so that they are able to speak confidently. They talk and ask questions and respond appropriately to adults and to each other. In lessons, they work cooperatively, share and take turns. They make appropriate choices and enjoy taking part in group activities such as counting to 12 when learning about time.

Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, their attainment in English and mathematics is above average. The lessons seen and a scrutiny of pupils' work show that the challenge in most lessons and expectations to work hard help them to make good progress. Most groups of pupils make good progress and any remaining gaps are rapidly closing. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs learn well because work is tailored to meet their needs and they receive good support to help them to meet their individual learning targets.

Pupils throughout the school enjoy reading and they have learned a wide range of strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. The systematic way in which letters and sounds (phonics) are taught helps those in Key Stage 1 to reach standards that are average by the end of Year 2. Pupils make good progress across Key Stage 2 so that, by the end of Year 6, attainment is above average and they confidently use their reading skills for research purposes as well as to read for pleasure.

Pupils write fluently with sophisticated vocabulary that sustains the interest of the reader. They regularly use these skills when learning in different subjects, and this helps them to develop confidence when committing their ideas to paper. In lessons, pupils have plenty of opportunities to communicate and to share their ideas. In one lesson, for example, they discussed food chains and considered the implications of a

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species of animal or plant that becomes extinct. They were able to express their views and to comment on those expressed by others, demonstrating a balanced point of view.

Pupils across the school have well-developed numeracy skills which they use to solve real-life problems. For example, in one lesson, pupils were learning to solve division problems by sharing sweets between groups. Scrutiny of pupils' work showed that they use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills when learning other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 used a combination of text and graphics to create their own cartoon strips.

Quality of teaching

Teachers use interesting methods to capture pupils' interest and inspire them to work hard. Pupils said that the lessons inspectors observed were typically challenging, and the work in their books confirmed this. Teachers have high expectations which are reflected in the high-quality of work found in pupils' books. Teachers set clear learning objectives linked to pupils' targets and plan their lessons to meet the wide range of pupils' learning needs. This enables all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, to make good progress from their various starting points.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers ensure that children get a good balance of activities that they select for themselves and those that are led by adults. Staff have made good use of space to create opportunities for children to work and play outside as well as in classrooms. Adults carefully observe children's learning and use the resulting information to plan new experiences which build on their learning and enable them to make good progress in their development.

Where teaching is occasionally weaker, the pace slows and opportunities to extend pupils' learning are missed. Where teaching is strongest, teachers generate high levels of enthusiasm for learning and consequently pupils make rapid progress. Most teachers are skilled at asking questions that enable pupils to explain their thinking, but many of these do not probe pupils' understanding deeply enough or encourage them to extend their knowledge, and this prevents them from reaching even higher levels.

Teachers make good use of assessment information to plan learning experiences that are well matched to the needs of pupils. In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers frequently check pupils' understanding and modify lessons so that all pupils achieve well. Systematic procedures for recording and tracking pupils' progress allow teachers to quickly identify those at risk of falling behind and to plan timely interventions to help them to catch up. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide detailed comments which tell pupils what they have done well and what they need to learn next. However, a few teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils correct and improve their work in writing and in mathematics.

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Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on deeper issues. In one lesson, for example, pupils considered the moral dilemma of whether a character from *Arabian Nights* should carry his brother's body home or whether he should take the treasure. This promoted a lively debate in which pupils reflected on the rights and wrongs of each course of action.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their typically good behaviour and their positive attitudes in lessons. Staff have consistent approaches to managing pupils' behaviour although pupils behave well most of the time because they enjoy learning. They say bullying is rare and they have a good understanding of different forms of bullying such as physical, emotional and cyber-bullying. When disagreements do occasionally occur, adults are on hand to quickly resolve issues.

In the playground and in lessons, pupils are polite, considerate and helpful to staff and to each other. One parent wrote, 'In my experience as a parent, the children really value friendship and caring amongst one another.' Almost all parents and carers who responded to the survey felt that behaviour and safety were good, and that few lessons were disrupted by poor behaviour. Exclusions are rare and there are few recorded incidents of poor behaviour over time.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and feel they have been well prepared to resist peer pressure associated with risks such as smoking or substance abuse. Older pupils enjoy helping younger ones at break times and this makes a good contribution to their social development. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to work and play with those from different backgrounds, and they show respect towards the cultures and beliefs of those from other parts of the world. Despite the school's best efforts to encourage good attendance, there remain a small minority of parents or carers who do not ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Leadership and management

School leaders and governors are ambitious and have high expectations for staff and pupils. Teamwork is strong and staff morale is high. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teachers' work are systematic and are used effectively to improve the quality of teaching. Consequently, teaching is typically good and improving. Robust systems to develop the skills of younger teachers prepare them well for management responsibilities as their careers progress. This ensures that there is good capacity within middle leaders for subject development.

School leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and have successfully brought about improvements since the previous inspection. For example, attainment in science has improved and is now above average. The planned curriculum has been developed to ensure that pupils acquire a secure grounding in the basic skills of English and mathematics, and

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consequently they consistently achieve well. It is well organised and makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The governing body is actively involved in many aspects of the school. Governors are provided with good-quality information, which they use effectively to monitor and challenge the work of the school. The school's procedures for safeguarding are good. All adults are carefully checked and arrangements for protecting pupils are robust. The governing body and leadership team ensure that equality and awareness of diversity are promoted very well. Consequently, the growth in the number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds has been managed especially well, with all pupils made to feel welcome as part of St Joseph School.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

30 April 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Joseph Roman Catholic Primary School, Watford, WD19 7DW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say, including through the questionnaires some of you completed. You told us that you enjoy school and that your teachers make your lessons interesting. You also told us that you enjoy working and playing with your friends, and that most people are friendly and helpful.

We found that your school is a good school. Most of you work hard in your lessons, and you make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. We found that the teachers make your lessons interesting and the school leaders work hard to make teaching even better. We found that, although your teachers ask you plenty of questions, these do not always make you think hard. Although teachers mark your work regularly, some of you are not clear about how well you are doing in lessons. We also found that not all of you attend school as regularly as you should.

This is what we have asked your school leaders to do to make your school even better.

- Make sure that teachers ask you more difficult questions in lessons to make you think hard and to probe your understanding.
- Ensure that teachers always provide you with opportunities to correct and improve your work when they have marked it, so you have a better understanding of how well you are doing.
- Work with your parents and carers to encourage you to attend school at all times unless you are very unwell.

I know that you will all do your best to help to make your school even better. You can help by asking the teachers if you can correct your work, and by telling your parents and carers how much you want to go to school every day. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Lead inspector

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