

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST JOSEPH'S RC VA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Stanley, Co Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114245

Headteacher: Mrs Jill H McBride

Reporting inspector: Fran Gillam  
21498

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 247438

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Front Street  
Stanley  
Co Durham

Postcode: DH9 0NP

Telephone number: 01207 232624

Fax number: 01207 231222

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev. J Park

Date of previous inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Joseph's is a smaller than average primary school situated in the centre of Stanley. There is a wide range of attainment on entry. The pattern in recent years shows children starting school with attainment that is lower than that expected for their age. The attainment of the present Reception children is similar to that expected for four year olds. The children attend school part-time for the first three weeks of the autumn term. Of the 191 pupils on roll almost all come from a white British background; a small number of pupils are of dual heritage. The school draws children from a wide area, with some areas facing challenging circumstances such as high unemployment. In spite of this, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than average, at 6.3 per cent. About 11 per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is below the national average but a higher than average percentage of pupils have statements of special educational needs: just over two per cent. The range of needs includes physical, emotional and behavioural, speech and language difficulties. There have been changes to staffing since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed in January 2001 and a new teacher joined the staff in September 2002. The school provides support and guidance for other schools in the local area as a Beacon school for physical education, dance and special educational needs through the visual arts.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

St Joseph's is a good school because standards are well above average in mathematics, science and English by Year 6. Children in the Reception class make a flying start to learning because of the exciting and relevant activities provided. Most pupils do well during their time in the school because of effective teaching. Pupils enjoy school because staff value their efforts; the pupils behave extremely well and try their best. The headteacher gives good leadership because, together with the governors, she sets out a clear vision for improvement. This is based upon the careful analysis of standards and how teaching influences pupils' rate of learning. The school gives good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils of all ages achieve well in literacy; in mathematics and science the rate of progress is more rapid in the older year groups and standards are high by Year 6.
- Children in the Reception Year have a very good start to school.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent; their attitudes towards school are very good because they are taught how to care for and work with one another extremely well.
- The headteacher and governors have a clear view of how well the school is doing; they manage developments to bring about improvements well.
- Parents are very pleased with the work of the school and value the opportunities they have to be involved in their children's learning.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- The way some teachers use questioning to involve different groups in the class so as to develop and check pupils' understanding more effectively.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

There has been good improvement since the last inspection in 1998 because the school has maintained well above average standards against an improving national picture. In the most recent tests, the results are better than in the previous year; notably improvement in mathematics and English by Year 6. There were two areas identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection. One has been dealt with well and reflects in the way that spending decisions now link more carefully to improving pupils' achievements, and developments are evaluated more effectively to ensure that the school is getting best value for money. Curriculum co-ordinators now have clear information about their roles and responsibilities. Some aspects have been fulfilled successfully such as the audit and purchase of resources and the analysis of test results. Other aspects, such as co-ordinators checking pupils' work to ensure that enough progress is being made and evaluating teaching and learning, have not yet taken place but are planned for this term. The headteacher and governors have introduced

more rigorous ways of checking how well the school is doing in the last 18 months. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	B	B	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	A	A	A	
Science	A	A	A*	A*	

The school has maintained high standards by Year 6 for the last four years. Standards in science in the tests in 2001 were in the top five per cent of all schools. Standards in mathematics and science have been consistently better than in English. However, in the tests in 2002, results were better in English and mathematics compared with previous years. The school has successfully improved the achievements of the higher attaining pupils by Year 6 in English and mathematics and maintained achievement in science. The focus upon developing pupils' mental mathematical skills has proved effective. The targets the school sets are realistic and challenging. The school does very well compared with schools with similar backgrounds. Pupils achieve well during their time in Years 3 to 6 with more rapid progress in the oldest year groups. By then pupils have a good grasp of their literacy skills, which reflects in the structure and range of their writing. In mathematics, pupils are adept at solving problems and have a good knowledge and understanding of shapes and measures. Effective use of investigational skills in science ensures that pupils use their scientific knowledge and understanding well to conduct experiments, make predictions and draw conclusions. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading and writing and pupils achieve well. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to organise their writing and to consider the reader when writing for different reasons. Whilst standards in the tests in 2001 were above average in mathematics this was not evident in the present pupils' work; standards are average and should be higher. The work in Year 1 and Year 2 does not provide enough challenge for the higher attaining pupils and for the some lower attaining pupils the work is too difficult. Children in the Reception Year do very well and soon develop very good personal and social skills. Children's development in mathematics and language and literacy progresses very well because of the opportunities they have to practise and consolidate their learning in activities such as painting, imaginative play, modelling and physical activity. By the time they are ready to start Year 1 children's attainment is above that expected for their age.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very good because they are enthusiastic about their learning; they concentrate and listen very well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is excellent because they conduct themselves sensibly and have an extremely good understanding of how what they do affects others.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' build excellent relationships with each other and the staff and their personal development is very good. Pupils enjoy having targets for their personal development and are pleased when they achieve them.
Attendance	Attendance is good and pupils like coming to school.

Children in the Reception Year soon learn the classroom routines. Their personal and social skills develop very well and are then built upon very effectively in the later years. The Christian ethos of the school helps develop pupils' understanding of the difference between right and wrong because staff set very good examples.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Satisfactory	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching is good. Teaching in English is good throughout the school. The basic skills of reading and writing are taught systematically. The balance between the need to practise and consolidate learning with the need to progress and learn new skills is effective; this supports the learning of pupils of different abilities successfully. Teachers have a good understanding of how to teach literacy and this shows in the way pupils by Year 6 structure their writing and spell and punctuate their work accurately. Teaching is good in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 because pupils develop effective ways to solve problems and calculate problems quickly. By comparison, teaching is satisfactory in mathematics in Years 1 to 2. There is an over-reliance upon workbooks and sheets and this does not ensure that the higher attaining pupils are always challenged sufficiently; at times the lower attaining pupils struggle with their work. As a result, learning is not as good as it could be and this lowers standards by the end of Year 2. Teachers have improved the quality of the questions they ask pupils by ensuring that answers require more than a short reply. However, in some lessons the teachers do not ask questions that ensure that all pupils have a chance to take part. This leads to some teachers not being fully aware of what the pupils can already do or where there might be problems. In some lessons, the demand made upon pupils was daunting; for example, too much was expected from them in organising scientific investigations. At these times learning could have been better. In the Reception Year, teaching is very good because activities are stimulating and capture the children's interest. The children get a very good start because of the emphasis placed upon helping them to develop their personal and social skills. They soon learn what is expected and they develop good working habits. Teaching finds the most effective ways of linking different aspects of the children's learning; for example, counting is practised when acting out stories or when working with play dough.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good and enhanced by effective use of the locality and visitors to school to support pupils' learning. Activities in the Reception Year are rich and varied. The school provides a curriculum that is relevant to the ages and interests of the pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs receive good support both in class and when working in small groups.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Pupils receive an extremely good grounding in the need to care for others and to work constructively together. The staff promote pupils' moral and social development successfully.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are good procedures in place to ensure the care and welfare of the pupils. The staff know the pupils well. Information about pupils' achievements is used well to focus support for groups and individuals.

The curriculum for children in the Reception class is rich and vibrant, providing a very good foundation for later schooling.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is good; she has brought about improvement and managed change well, resulting in better test results in 2002 in English and mathematics.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a very good idea of how well the school is doing. They are very supportive and clear about their roles and responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Whilst the headteacher checks how well pupils are doing and shares this information well with staff and governors, the curriculum co-ordinators are still not involved sufficiently in checking standards in their subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the funds it has to provide support for teaching and learning.

The governors and headteacher make a good job of comparing the standards the school achieves and in challenging whether the school is doing well enough. They use the information well to inform decisions and measure the success of developments. Parents' views are sought on items such as the range of pupils' uniform and homework.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The team agrees with the parents' positive views. Whilst the range of activities outside lessons is extensive for the older pupils there is very little on offer for pupils in the younger classes. The school is in the process of setting up a tabletop games club for the younger pupils.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Pupils of all ages achieve well in literacy; in mathematics and science the rate of progress is more rapid in the older year groups and standards are high by Year 6.**

1. Pupils learn well in literacy because teaching, for example, in Years 1 and 2 places a strong emphasis upon developing pupils' understanding of the sounds of letters and how these are used in reading and writing. Regular reading in school, supported by parents at home, soon develops a good knowledge of a range of words that pupils come across frequently to help them read more fluently. Confidence develops well in reading because of the teaching of different ways to tackle unfamiliar words. Pupils enjoy reading and this stays with them throughout the school. By Year 6, they use their reading skills effectively to gather information from sources, such as books and the Internet. This has proved effective, for example in the pupils' work on World War II, and has also provided a useful stimulus for writing.
2. By Year 2, pupils use punctuation and structure their writing so that it makes sense. For example, their stories have a clear opening, where characters are introduced and the scene is set; in the middle section of the story the tale unfolds well and they bring all the threads of the story to a sensible conclusion. Over the course of the year, the higher attaining pupils become more accurate in spelling and punctuation. They choose how they use words to add interest to their stories, for example, "one pig stuttered, 'My name is... my name is...'" to emphasise the little pig's fear when confronted by the wolf. Average attaining and lower attaining pupils also do well because they move from writing short sentences to more detailed and lengthy accounts by the end of the year. In spelling, punctuation and the structure of their writing there is clear improvement over the course of the year. Chances to practise and refine their skills reflect in the standard of their work which is as expected for their age. The way that teaching caters for pupils with special educational needs and those who sometimes struggle with their work effectively builds in the right level of challenge to help these pupils do well.
3. By Year 6, pupils cover a thoughtful and interesting range of writing. The effective practice of grammatical skills such as punctuation and paragraphing is balanced efficiently with the chances given to write lengthier pieces. Over time, boys' performance improves and the gap between their standards and that of girls' narrows from two terms difference by the age of seven to very little difference by Year 6. The range of visits out of school and visitors into school often provides an effective stimulus to writing, for example, visits to local museums and acting as Victorians for a school day. This gives relevance to writing tasks and captures both boys' and girls' interest.
4. Pupils of different abilities benefit from the level of demand that teaching places upon them. This is evident in the teacher's marking, which is supportive but at the same time probing, for example, "How could you use an adverb here?" to help develop the pupils' thinking and vocabulary. The rate of pupils' progress is more rapid by Years 5 and 6 as pupils become more adept at using the skills they have learned in previous years. At the start of the year, the higher attaining and average attaining pupils are already competent writers, able to write at length and produce well-structured accounts and stories. Written work from last year shows pupils successfully developing expression in their writing. Sentences contain words that grip the reader's attention and by the end of the year standards of punctuation and spelling are very good. The lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs develop their skills well over the course of the year. From writing that sometimes lacks expression, with some grammatical and spelling errors, they become more accurate in spelling and adventurous in their choice of words. By the end of the year, they do as well as expected for their age. The levels attained by pupils reflect the success of the school in raising standards further in English and the well above average standards seen in the pupils' work by Year 6.

5. The rapid progress in mathematics and science in the older classes is again due to these pupils being more able and having better opportunities than the younger pupils to use and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding to solve problems and answer questions. By Year 6, the pupils complete a wide range of mathematical tasks. Pupils' work last year shows good progress for boys and girls and pupils of different attainments. Teachers in Years 5 and 6 provide challenge for the pupils by building effectively on what they have learned before. Teaching provides the lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs with a good balance between the need for repetition and practice to consolidate learning and the introduction of new work. This gives these pupils a firm base and the confidence to tackle increasingly more complex calculations over the course of the year. Pupils of average attainment are not always as accurate in calculating as the higher attaining pupils but they have a wide mathematical experience. Their good understanding of mathematical facts helps them to solve problems efficiently and use what they know to work out ways to calculate totals quickly. By the end of the year, along with their higher attaining classmates, they are attaining standards above those expected for 11 year olds. They have good knowledge of multiplication facts, the properties of shapes and how to convert units of measure when calculating, for example, the weight of ingredients in a recipe expressed in pounds and ounces to kilograms and grams.
6. By Year 6, pupils have a good diet of investigation and experimental work to develop and consolidate their scientific knowledge and understanding. In lessons, teachers provide pupils with scientific problems to solve, such as separating a mixture of substances or testing the hardness of different types of rock. By the time pupils are in Year 6, they are able to carry out an experiment, carefully considering the need to make their test fair. For example, when dissolving sugar in water, they make the same number of stirs and keep the amount of water they use constant. They successfully draw upon their earlier observations to make sensible guesses at what will happen. From this they draw conclusions and strengthen their understanding of terms such as solid, liquid, solution and soluble. Pupils of different attainments benefit from working in groups, where they share their ideas and draw information from one another. Teachers pose questions in worksheets that take account of the differing needs of the groups within the class, building in demand and ensuring that the lower attaining and those with special educational needs do not struggle. The teaching makes good use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills to support learning. Pupils write their own accounts of investigations and use charts, tables and graphs to present their results. They also make good use of illustrations and diagrams to explain their scientific understanding.

### **Children in the Reception Year have a very good start to school.**

7. The children get off to a flying start in the Reception class because teaching links the different areas of learning very well. These most effective links bring purpose and relevance to the activities the children engage in. The strong emphasis on developing children's personal and social skills provides a firm basis for much of the children's learning. The way that the adults know the strengths of the children, as well as their needs, ensures that they participate in activities at a level that helps them to make very good progress in their first year in school.
8. Children settle very quickly and happily into school. They soon learn what is expected from them because teaching consistently but sensitively reminds them, for example, to tidy away equipment when they have finished using it. They quickly realise that there are times when it is important to listen and times when they can offer their ideas because this is emphasised extremely well in whole class lessons and small group work. The children make very good progress and are already well on their way to attaining the early learning goals<sup>1</sup> for their personal, social and emotional development.

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<sup>1</sup> Early learning goals set out what children are expected to know by the end of the Reception Year before starting the National Curriculum in Year 1.

9. The children benefit from a sensitive introduction to school. They attend part-time in the first few weeks, and this allows the staff to focus their support on small groups of children. This very successfully develops good relationships between the children and adults. The staff quickly assess the children's personal needs and provide help accordingly. By the time children start full-time they are well used to what is expected from them. The children reflect this in the high level of involvement they show in activities. They concentrate for extended periods of time and persist with tasks of their choosing. This was particularly evident when some boys were drawing maps of Brave Little Bear's journey; they concentrated well and were able to accurately show his route. Earlier in the day, the children had acted out the story of his journey and this provided a good basis for them to record in a sequenced picture or map what he encountered along the way.
10. Teaching makes most effective links between the areas of learning<sup>2</sup> for children of this age. All activities have close links to the main theme being covered and this brings meaning to the tasks and maintains the children's interest. Children willingly take part in whole class lessons because teaching encourages them to use words or gestures to share their ideas. This ensures that all children have the chance to express themselves. Teaching makes very good use of the stories to introduce new terms such as character and title to help children learn the early skills of literacy. Teaching effectively promotes a love of books, which extends the children's use of words to describe what they see and feel. This is reinforced extremely well through action, songs and drama, which exploit not only the language children encounter but also reinforces counting, for example, as the children counted the stepping-stones over the river in Brave Little Bear's journey. Physical activity and a chance for children to create their own movements in response to songs and stories give them a growing awareness of the need to move safely and with consideration for others.
11. The activities in the classroom further develop the links between the areas of learning because the early skills of reading and structuring stories are reinforced when children use illustrations to help them retell stories. Higher attaining children already know that letters and words have meaning and handle books carefully. Children initiate talk, more often the boys, but all of them like to share what they are doing. Children who are more reticent offer ideas well on a one-to-one basis because the staff are very sensitive when working with them. The children are made to feel that their views are important and their efforts valued.
12. Children develop a good understanding of the wider world. For example, equipment in the sand provides the chance for children to learn the names of wild animals. The higher attaining children competently name the creatures and show an understanding of features in the landscape such as hills, valleys and caves. This language has been strengthened through discussion and listening to stories in class.
13. Children with special educational needs are fully involved in activities because teaching is well aware of their needs and meets them most effectively. Adults encourage these children to try out the different range of activities. Staff keep an effective overview of the activities children engage in to check their involvement. This is linked well to the recognition of the children's own names which they colour in each time they participate in an activity. This means the staff can guide children towards activities that could provide more practice, for example, in manipulating small objects such as using tools with the play dough or building with bricks.
14. Teaching makes very good use of rhymes and actions to reinforce children's knowledge of number and space. Throughout one lesson that focused on mathematical development, the children's faces were wreathed in smiles because teaching made learning fun. There were plenty of chances for children to join in, show what they could do and experience number. Once again, teaching made effective links with the other areas of learning as the children

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<sup>2</sup> Areas of learning – there are six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and, creative development.

moved either to the left or right and counted the steps they made up to ten. Higher attaining children recognised most of the numerals between zero and ten and counted accurately during rhymes and action songs. Average attaining and lower attaining children tended to choose a numeral of either personal significance, such as their age, or one that they had recently learned. Teaching also promoted some early scientific understanding very well during this session. As children took part in a parachute game, questions such as “What do you feel? What can you see?” encouraged the children to talk about the movement of the air on their faces and develop an emerging understanding of what was happening as they pulled and lifted the parachute.

**Pupils’ behaviour is excellent; their attitudes towards school are very good because they are taught how to care for and work with one another extremely well.**

15. From the very good start in the Reception Year, pupils continue to develop their personal skills very effectively. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations of pupils’ behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. This shows in the way that pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and the impact of their actions upon others. There is a strong emphasis upon pupils being involved in developing class and school rules and this gives pupils a better understanding of why rules are necessary. They are fully aware that their good behaviour will be acknowledged and of the implications should they misbehave. Pupils overwhelmingly feel that any action taken is always fair; this goes a long way towards pupils accepting and following the class and school rules conscientiously. In lessons and around the school, the pupils’ behaviour is exemplary.
16. Pupils are kind and considerate to others because this is expected and promoted very well, through assemblies and being involved in charitable acts. The strong lead the school gives in considering the needs of others helps the pupils to be aware of those who are less fortunate. The links made with the Catholic aid group St Cuthbert’s Care reflect the Christian teaching of the school; it develops in pupils’ clear understanding of the community of the wider world and the part that they can play in it. The support for the pupils’ social and moral development is excellent; staff develop excellent relationships with the pupils and let the pupils know that they value both their personal and academic achievements. These are celebrated in weekly assemblies and in the displays that record pupils’ sporting achievements and the contributions made, for example, to a local charitable trust.
17. The pupils explain how much they like school and how much they value their friendship with their classmates. They enjoy working in groups because this gives them the chance to work with their friends. The pupils talk warmly about the staff, about how they listen to them and note their achievements. This has a significant impact upon how well pupils behave, try hard and concentrate in lessons. In every lesson pupils listen closely to their teachers and settle quickly to their work. Boys and girls are actively involved in lessons; they work well together and share their ideas and equipment fairly. In small groups they are attentive to each other’s needs and take turns fairly. Even when sometimes they find the task quite challenging they persist and try to master what they are doing, for example, during science investigations. However, it is often the more confident or higher attaining pupils who readily answer questions and more could be done to ensure that individuals and different groups participate more frequently. Nevertheless, all pupils are eager to talk about their work when asked. Most enjoy their lessons and are rightly proud of their achievements. In particular, the pupils like having personal targets to aim for because it provides a basis for improvement. The pupils like to know how they are doing. Older pupils see the relevance and value of homework in supporting their learning because the staff explain clearly to pupils the purpose of the work and often link it to activities covered in class. Pupils also understand the value of education and some pupils in Year 6 talked about wanting to go to university and how working hard can help you do better when you leave school.

18. The pupils are happy at St Joseph's; there is a calm yet purposeful atmosphere in the school. It is underpinned by the high value placed upon developing pupils' personal skills from the Reception Year to Year 6.

**The headteacher and governors have a clear view of how well the school is doing; they manage developments to bring about improvements well.**

19. The headteacher has a clear vision for improving the school, effectively shared with governors and staff. This is based upon the accurate analysis of how well pupils are doing and using this information to identify areas for improvement within the curriculum and teaching.
20. At the time of the last inspection, an area for improvement concerned the role that curriculum co-ordinators played in evaluating the strengths and areas for improvement within their subjects. Since the appointment of the headteacher 18 months ago, a more rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluating the school's work has been introduced. This has included a more accurate and detailed analysis of test results, the observation of teaching and learning across the school and the analysis of pupils' work. Much of this work has been carefully and sensitively introduced because the staff were not used to a climate of self-evaluation that included regular observation of teaching. In the first instance, the headteacher with support from the local education authority carried out much of this work. This evaluation has given clear targets for staff in each year group to work towards to raise standards even further. This ensures that accountability for raising standards rests with all the staff. The focus upon improving the achievement of the higher attaining pupils has proved successful with the results in English and mathematics by Year 6 being higher than previously. This was following improved teaching of mental strategies to solve mathematical problems and posing questions that required pupils to think more deeply about what they were writing and how they could improve.
21. The information from evaluations is shared effectively with the governors. This, along with their shared vision for the school, provides the sound basis for making decisions. Decisions are carefully thought through with comparisons between the standards in St Joseph's and other schools fully investigated. This allows governors to challenge the quality of work undertaken in the school and, with the headteacher, to seek ways in which it can improve. This informs the school's plan for improvement very well in the short term. The pattern of self-review is built into the longer term plan to ensure continuity and balance across the curriculum.
22. The governors provide very good support for the headteacher and staff. They listen to suggestions and temper their decisions by ensuring they balance any developments with ensuring best value for money. For example, the development of the computer suite, whilst costly, was weighed against the additional time this would provide for teaching larger groups of pupils and greater access to computers to develop information, communication and technology skills across the curriculum. Other areas where best value has been evident is in the securing of insurance cover for absent staff, reducing the supply teaching costs, and improving the way that curriculum co-ordinators audit and purchase learning resources.
23. The school is well placed to continue developments. There is a cycle of staff development based upon teachers' professional and personal needs, informed successfully by observing lessons and the analysis of test results. There is shared commitment to improve and to strive to do even better in the future.

**Parents are very pleased with the work of the school and value the opportunities they have to be involved in their children's learning.**

24. Parents appreciate the way their children are cared for and the way they are taught how to be kind and considerate towards others. The school promotes the values parents hold important very well; this reflects in the high level of good behaviour throughout the school and the

respect that pupils show to others. The parents sense that their children are made to feel special; the pupils also share this view and this helps them to work hard and do their best. It also is a strong reason why pupils like coming to school.

25. The start that children have in the Reception class fosters good working relationships between home and school. This is built on effectively and shows in the way that many parents hear their children read at home and help them complete their homework. Most parents feel that the work the school asks their children to do at home is of good quality and helps the children to build upon what has been learned, so they can improve and do even better.
26. In the last 18 months, parents of pupils with special educational needs have had a greater involvement in their children's learning. At the parents' meeting before the inspection, a number of parents commented upon how quickly the school informs them if children are experiencing any problems. Being kept informed is an important aspect of the link between home and school and parents feel that they are better prepared to help their child at home or seek support should they want it. Parents cited examples of pupils growing in confidence and doing better than expected for their age following support in booster classes and work at home. This is not only the case for parents with children who have special educational needs. Parents of pupils of different attainment appreciate the efforts made to help them understand, for example, how literacy and numeracy are taught, and how they can play a part in their children's education. This has given them the confidence to offer their support in school and for some to go on to further education to train as classroom assistants.
27. Parents receive clear and regular information from the school about events taking place and about how well their children are doing. This also helps them to play a greater part in the life of the school and support their children's learning. The active Friends of St Joseph's raise substantial funds for the school. Their contributions have supported setting up the computer suite and a teaching base for pupils with special educational needs. This has improved the provision in these areas, providing greater chances for pupils to use computers in the course of their work and giving pupils with special educational needs a bright and pleasant working environment.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2.**

28. Standards by the end of Year 2 and pupils' achievements in mathematics should be better. This is because there is too much reliance on the use of workbooks and worksheets in Years 1 and 2. This leads to the higher attaining pupils not always being challenged and some lower attaining pupils struggling with the work because it is not at the right level for them.
29. The higher attaining pupils in both year groups do not have enough chances to develop their own ways of solving or recording calculations. There is little difference in the work they complete compared with their average attaining classmates. Whilst in whole class discussions there is some opportunity for them to show what they can do, this information is not always used effectively by teachers to plan the next stage of their work. This was evident when some higher attaining pupils easily mastered the use of a number line yet were given more exercises of the same type to do the next day before moving onto more demanding work. For these pupils, teaching could have made better use of time to increase their pace of learning. The workbooks and worksheets involve the higher attaining pupils in unnecessary repetition of examples and place a limit on the size of numbers they use and how they apply their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding.
30. Sometimes the lower attaining pupils are given the same workbook page or worksheet to complete as their classmates. This leads to these pupils leaving work unfinished or making errors. At these times, teaching is not effective in building confidence or in ensuring that the pupils have enough time to practise their skills and apply their knowledge and understanding to

consolidate learning. As a result, they struggle with some of the tasks or require adult support to complete their work.

31. The school is in the second year of using a published mathematics scheme. The workbooks in Years 1 and 2 are rarely completed and the cost effectiveness of their use in developing pupils' mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding is unsatisfactory. Pupils' work has not yet been analysed to check the effectiveness of the scheme in supporting teaching and learning. At present, teachers' use of the scheme in Years 1 and 2 is not effective because they are not adapting the tasks sufficiently well to take account of the differing needs of the higher attaining and lower attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good use of the information about what they can and cannot do, as this is used successfully to target work and support. The average attaining and those pupils with special educational needs make better progress than their classmates, as the tasks they engage in meet their needs more effectively.

**The way some teachers use questioning to involve different groups in the class so as to develop and check pupils' understanding more effectively.**

32. The difference in the quality of teaching and learning seen between lessons relates closely to how some teachers involve pupils in discussions and check their understanding through questioning. Over the past year, the school has focused upon the quality of questioning to help raise standards further. This has been successful in raising standards by Year 6 in mathematics and English because questions have been framed so that pupils have to think carefully and provide more than one word answers. The quality of most teachers' questions is good but how some direct the questions to get a response from different groups of pupils in the class is not precise enough. Too often questions begin with, "Can somebody...?" or "Can anybody give me...?" In these lessons, often only the most confident or the same few pupils consistently raise their hands to answer. The impact of this is that in these lessons discussions rarely develop, and are teacher led. For example, in a drama lesson in Year 6, lower attaining pupils were not encouraged to provide words to describe how they might feel in an air raid and in a Year 5 history lesson about Henry VIII pupils provided few comments of their own to develop their ideas further.
33. Not directing questions carefully can lead to some mismatch of tasks. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson, the demand made upon pupils was unrealistic because they were asked to work together when their skills in sharing ideas were not developed well enough. The teacher did not check first through careful questioning that the pupils fully understood the task. This led to them being unable to undertake the task independently and describe their findings in detail. To a lesser degree this was also evident for some of the time in a Year 6 science lesson. Here the teachers' questioning did not go far enough in checking that the pupils were sure of what they had to do before they started on the task. As a result, time was wasted because the pupils were not able to organise themselves effectively. Whilst this was overcome through further explanation it made a slower start to the lesson than necessary. The pace of learning under these circumstances could be better and teaching more effective as a result.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

34. The governors, headteacher and staff should:

- a) Raise standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2 by:
  - ensuring that the work provided for the higher and lower attaining pupils, builds more effectively upon what they know, can do and understand;
  - ensuring that pupils have greater opportunities to record their mathematical work in different ways.
  
- b) Improve the strategies some teachers use in discussions and when questioning pupils by:
  - ensuring that they focus questions upon individuals and different groups to draw in and involve all pupils;
  - ensuring that they assess pupils' answers to help them gauge how well the pupils are doing, whether they need further support and what they need to learn next.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

11

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

9

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	2	3	5	0	0	0
Percentage	9	18	27	45	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than nine percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	191
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	18

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
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#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	19	11	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	17	17
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	26	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (78)	93 (89)	93 (93)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	19
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	28	28	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (85)	93 (93)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	19	8	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	23	22	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (86)	81 (86)	93 (90)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	20	22	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (67)	81 (76)	93 (90)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

\* Because fewer than ten girls took the tests in 2001, the numbers of both girls and boys are omitted from the tables in line with the governors' reporting arrangements to parents.

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	161	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	28

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	394405
Total expenditure	378312
Expenditure per pupil	1950
Balance brought forward from previous year	5196
Balance carried forward to next year	21289

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	191
Number of questionnaires returned	73

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	30	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	26	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	32	3	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	42	11	1	7
The teaching is good.	71	27	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	36	8	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	30	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	42	53	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	51	42	1	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	32	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	37	22	1	10