



St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100832
Local Authority Southwark
Inspection number 285895
Inspection dates 8–9 January 2007
Reporting inspector Wendy Simmons

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	George Row
School category	Voluntary aided		Bermondsey
Age range of pupils	3–11		London SE16 4UP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02072374267
Number on roll (school)	348	Fax number	02072371618
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Stuart Long
		Headteacher	Mr Mark Macauley
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 8–9 January 2007	Inspection number 285895
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a large and popular inner city school serving a culturally diverse community. Almost all pupils are baptised Catholics. The largest groups include pupils from White British and Black African backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils speak English in addition to their home language, although only a few are at the earliest stages of learning English. The social backgrounds of pupils are very wide ranging however, overall, significant deprivation is evident. An average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties. The school was recognised as a 'Beacon School' between 2002 and 2003 and has gained the 'Healthy Schools' award. In April 2006 a fire destroyed much of the accommodation, which is currently under reconstruction.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

At the time of the last inspection the school was judged to be very effective. Since then, St Joseph's has continued to improve and is now an outstandingly successful school. Highly supportive relationships between staff, parents, governors and pupils have resulted in the swift re-establishment of the school following the fire. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. The words of one parent confirm the views of many when commenting, 'This is a wonderful school.'

Outstanding leadership and management, by the visionary headteacher and senior management team, are at the core of this school's success. Together with outstanding teaching and learning and a very interesting curriculum, pupils make exceptional progress and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Considering pupils' below average starting point when joining the school, this reflects outstanding achievement. Pupils agree that the school really prepares them well for their future lives. One said, 'Teachers get us ready for our next school, so that we won't struggle with literacy and numeracy, we learn hard things to get better.' Pupils do particularly well in reading, science and mathematics. Leaders have high expectations to lift standards further in writing. While almost all pupils reach the expected level by the end of Year 6, the school is ambitious to increase the proportion that attains the higher Level. Leaders recognise that more effective marking of pupils' work is key to this, so that pupils are given greater guidance on how to improve.

The pupils are very enthusiastic, work hard and are rightly proud of their school. They say that the school is, 'Just great.' Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. As a result, pupils adopt healthy lives, know how to be safe, gain confidence and contribute much to their community. Their behaviour is exemplary. The outstanding partnership with local organisations enlivens pupils' enjoyment of learning. For example, they had great fun when they slept the night on board 'HMS Belfast' and acted out aspects of the Second World War, as part of a history and literacy project.

The school's development plan correctly focuses on improving the site following the fire. Notably, the outside learning and recreation areas have been ruined by the building work. Pupils are making the very best of limited outside play space but this requires much complex timetabling and is far from ideal.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve marking, so that it helps and guides pupils to develop their writing to an even higher standard.
- Develop the outside learning and recreation areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 overall, with exceptionally high standards in mathematics and science. Standards in English are above average with pupils doing especially well in developing reading, as they have many opportunities to read with adults and talk about texts. For example, pupils are reading 'Journey to the River Sea' and are going to compare the text with the theatre production. The school is focusing on writing in the drive to raise standards in English to a high level.

Achievement is outstanding. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. This good progress continues between Years 1 and 2, which brings standards up to average by the end of Year 2. Pupils then make outstanding progress between Years 3 and 6 with almost every pupil reaching the expected level by the end of Year 6. A very significant proportion attains even higher standards in reading, mathematics and science. Outstanding overall progress reflects the way in which skills build up progressively, staff's very high expectations and the whole school focus on speaking skills, which helps pupils of all abilities, including those new to learning English to make rapid progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, they attend regularly and are keen to learn. This starts well in the Foundation Stage, with children quickly learning to work with others, concentrate and persevere. As they move through the school, pupils become more socially aware about the feelings and needs of people in the world around them. They make an outstanding contribution to the community by raising money for many charities and through their work with local theatres, such as 'The Globe' and 'The National.' Pupils take part in a many exercise and sports activities. Here, outstanding links with local sports clubs for rugby, football and dance help them to adopt healthy life styles. The school has worked very hard at developing pupils' awareness of their own emotions and how to handle difficult situations. This results in raised self esteem and confidence. For example, the 'Scary Little Girls' drama workshop helped pupils to explore their feeling about bullying and how to overcome this. Pupils commented that any bullying is quickly sorted out and is rare in the school. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of very high quality. Notably, assemblies, with a strong Christian ethos, enhance this well and contribute to the respect and care that pupils show for each other. Pupils have a very good awareness of right and wrong and how to help each other.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers have very high expectations and are very knowledgeable about how pupils learn. They make effective use of visual aids, information and communication technology (ICT) and assessment information. Lessons are very well planned so that pupils of all abilities are given suitably challenging work and support staff help pupils very effectively. As a consequence of these features, pupils understand new things quickly and make outstanding progress. Adults' high quality questioning and the promotion of speaking skills extend pupils' thinking very well. The focus on problem solving and investigation skills is an important reason why standards are high in mathematics and science. Learning is further enriched by homework, help from parents and the partnership with the outside agencies. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is good, with a strong focus on basic skills and personal development although, outside learning is currently hampered by building work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Very high quality visits and extra activities make learning fun and aid pupils' understanding of new ideas. Links between subjects are well planned so that learning is fun and meaningful to pupils. There is a very strong focus on personal development and the acquisition of basic skills of speaking, literacy, numeracy, science and ICT. The curriculum is carefully modified to meet the wider ranging learning needs of pupils. Gifted and talented pupils have exciting opportunities to develop dance, art, sports, music and drama.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides its pupils with good care, guidance and support. Pastoral care is of very high quality and reflects the interest that staff show in pupils as individuals. Child Protection and health and safety procedures are robust and parents confirm that their children are well cared for. Staff are vigilant to hazards concerning the current building work. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported and reflect excellent links with specialists in the community. As a result, pupils benefit from clear guidance about how to overcome learning, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is a very good focus on supporting pupils learning English as a very new language. Pupils know their targets, but marking of work does not give pupils a consistently clear understanding about what they need to do to improve to reach high standards in writing. Good arrangements are in place to help children to settle into the Foundation Stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Parents strongly agree that the school is well led and pupils' and parents' views are highly valued in the evaluation and improvement process. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are very high and these are driven by the very strong leadership from the headteacher and a highly effective senior management team. Middle managers support school development well. Self evaluation is good and systems for monitoring pupils' progress have developed effectively during the last two years. These are now good overall but leaders are still fine tuning systems to track progress through the Foundation Stage to Year 2.

The school has an outstanding capacity to improve. High standards have been sustained in challenging circumstances and effective action taken to address issues raised at the last inspection. For instance, provision for teaching ICT is much improved and standards higher. Governance is good, and provides strong support for school improvement, especially in light of the quick action that was taken to ensure that all pupils continued to be educated in this school following the fire.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

You may remember that three inspectors came to your school recently to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for being so friendly and telling us about your school. We are writing to let you know what we found out.

Your school is outstanding, which means that it does many things exceptionally well and there are few things to improve. Clearly you enjoy coming to school and like learning. Well done for behaving so well, please keep this up, as it is a real credit to you, especially after the disruptions caused by the fire. You like your teachers and they like you. They give you many exciting activities, which makes learning fun and we know that you appreciate this. Outstanding teaching and learning opportunities help all of you to make exceptional progress and reach standards that are higher than those expected for 11 year olds. This is a real achievement and shows how hard you work and the superb efforts that your teachers make to help you to do so well. You do especially well in reading, mathematics and science because your teachers set you interesting problems to solve. We especially like the way the school helps you to discuss your ideas and use new and difficult words. The links that you have with your community are very impressive; we were pleased to hear about how you performed on the 'HMS Belfast', so that the tourists could learn as much about war time as you did!

The school is very well led. Your headteacher and all of the staff and governors are working especially hard to make the school even better. We have asked them to do the following things.

- Mark your writing clearly so that you know what you need to do to make it even better.
- Develop the outside learning and play areas.

Keep up the good work and well done!

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector