



Our Lady and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106942
Local Authority Rotherham
Inspection number 287658
Inspection dates 21–22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Joyce Taylor

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Fitzwilliam Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Wath-upon-Dearne, Rotherham
Age range of pupils	3–11		South Yorkshire S63 7HG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01709 760084
Number on roll (school)	202	Fax number	01709 760655
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Mark Janvier
		Headteacher	Mrs Maureen O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	21–22 February 2007	287658

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

About half the pupils from this average sized primary school come from the local area though a rising proportion come from further afield. Overall, pupils come from areas of average social and economic advantage as can be seen in the below average percentage of pupils who have free school meals. The proportion of pupils having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average and the proportion having statements of special educational need is slightly higher than in most schools. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Our Lady and Saint Joseph's Catholic Primary School provides a satisfactory level of education for its pupils. Standards are rising and the parents are pleased with the way their children are developing as confident and enthusiastic individuals. The school is generally calm and the pupils behave well. As a result, they settle happily to their work and try hard.

Pupils' personal development is good because of the good care, guidance and support they receive. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They act on an extremely clear understanding of what is right and wrong and provide unasked support and help for each other. In one class a pupil, after carefully explaining to his friend how to work out how much to pay for an item, said, 'I'm being helpful, aren't I?' Pupils enjoy coming to school and thrive in the school's warm and supportive atmosphere. This is reflected in their good attendance. They enjoy taking responsibility and understand the importance of their roles. One young pupil said proudly, 'I was playground monitor today, I helped put things out for the others to play with.' The pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles is developing well and they talk knowledgeably about the need for regular exercise.

Overall, children start in Nursery with lower levels of attainment in early writing and mathematical calculation than are typical for their age. Effective teaching in the Foundation Stage ensures the children make good progress. This lifts standards so that by the end of Reception children reach average levels in relation to national expectations. Standards at the end of Year 2, whilst broadly average, are pushing towards above average levels and the pupils make good progress. The rate of progress slows in Key Stage 2 and, over the past few years, achievement has been unsatisfactory by the end of Year 6. The school is resolving this concern and the pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making up lost ground at a satisfactory and sometimes fast pace, particularly in English, but achievement in mathematics is still too low. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are given good support and make satisfactory progress as a result.

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is excellent, lively teaching in some classes: where pupils are involved in their own learning through group work or discussions they make good progress. However, the quality of teaching varies considerably across the school and, in some lessons, pupils tend to sit listening for too long without sufficient opportunity to apply what they have learned so that progress slows. New-style, recently developed assessments of pupils' work in Years 1 to 6 are highlighting these inconsistencies by identifying the pace of progress. As a result, senior staff are now providing support to improve teaching where progress slips and this is helping to improve achievement.

The curriculum is satisfactory with good opportunities for the pupils' personal development. Where teaching is strong the curriculum is interesting and subjects link together well through exciting lessons. As yet, not all teachers provide this good range of 'hands on' tasks. The school has worked hard to broaden pupils' experiences through,

for example, a wide range of visits. This ensures that pupils usually enjoy their lessons and they readily identify French, music and information and communication technology as being the most fun. This good level of enjoyment contributes to their rising standards.

The headteacher and senior staff provide satisfactory leadership. Their evaluation of the school is accurate, although, in anticipation of expected improvements, they have judged the school's capacity to improve to be higher than the inspection findings of satisfactory. They have clear plans for school improvement. Their firm approach is helping the school turn around long-standing difficulties, achieve consistency of provision and improve pupils' achievement but there is still some way to go. As a result, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure all pupils receive the same level of provision.
- Ensure the curriculum provision is consistent in all year groups and is modelled on the best in the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of both the Foundation Stage and Year 2 pupils achieve well. Because their activities and lessons are exciting and involve them, their learning is good and standards are rising rapidly. Over the past few years the school has experienced difficulties in Years 3 to 6. By the time pupils reached the oldest classes there was insufficient time to make up the lost ground. As a result, pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory. Recent developments are improving provision and an effective strategy to raise standards in Key Stage 2 is already reaping benefits. In English, where pupils are making up lost ground at a faster rate, pupils are set challenging targets which ensure they know exactly what they need to do to improve. Improvement in mathematics is steady but not yet fast enough to ensure satisfactory achievement throughout Key Stage 2. However, due to good teaching in Year 6, an increased proportion of pupils reach the higher level in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school lives out the characteristics of its Catholic status. Pupils are valued and are at the heart of the school's work. Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage, where they learn to get on well together and enjoy learning. Pupils' behaviour is good overall, although in one or two classes they sometimes become over-excited and this interrupts their learning. Pupils know and talk warmly about other faiths and cultures. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

As one pupil said, 'Being healthy helps you learn.' The school guides pupils well to become independent and responsible. Links with other schools, particularly Catholic schools, are strong, so pupils transfer smoothly to the next phase of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In the Foundation Stage activities are well structured and show a good understanding of how young children learn. Pupils' learning is good in Year 2 as a result of outstanding teaching, but in some other year groups work is not always challenging enough and tasks are not exciting. As a consequence, pupils' learning is satisfactory. The headteacher and senior staff have introduced appropriate plans to address this and provision is improving. Many pupils say teachers 'make learning fun' and one pupil said, 'Our teacher lets us do the thinking.' One Year 4 pupil enthusiastically explained how his class had made a 'mini-mine' under the tables in his classroom to learn 'how miners felt'. He added, 'People think it's play but we learn loads!' Most pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and are praised for their efforts. As a result pupils, like their teachers, try hard in lessons and respond well to the values that the school promotes. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in lessons and receive good support from teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum varies from class to class. Some teachers have a tremendous flair for organising effective learning through exciting activities, whilst other classes experience tasks based more on pencil and paper activities. As a result, learning jumps forward during some years and steadies during others. Learning is extended well by a good range of visits to places of interest. A residential visit for Year 6, for example, is a highlight for pupils and enhances their personal development alongside their learning in curriculum subjects. Pupils learn French and thoroughly enjoy these lessons. The provision for sport is strong and pupils enjoy their successes when in competitions against other schools. Appropriate provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship ensures they are fully aware of health matters.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Health and safety are given high priorities and child protection procedures are robust. Staff know their pupils very well and sensitively monitor and support them. As a result, pupils' confidence grows and their self-esteem blossoms, which enhances their personal development and well-being. Every child knows that they matter and they appreciate the care and support the school gives them. As one pupil said, 'They help you if you're

sad or hurt.' Parents are pleased with the warm, welcoming environment and appreciate the care provided for their children. Close working relationships with a range of agencies provides vulnerable pupils with the support they need to begin overcoming barriers to learning. Pupils feel very safe in school and if trouble happens they feel that they can go to trusted adults who will deal with the problem effectively. As one pupil said, 'Teachers sort it out.' Assessments of pupils' work is strengthening and highlighting inconsistencies in the progress they make. Better use is now being made of this information to help raise pupils' achievement. Marking is inconsistent across subjects and does not always inform pupils of what they need to learn next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

In the past, difficulties, leading to staff changes, have absorbed considerable management time and undermined the school's plans for improvement. Parents are very appreciative of the way the school supports their children's personal development but several also raise concerns about inconsistencies as pupils move from class to class. Acknowledging this, senior staff now recognise the necessity to rigorously monitor the teaching and the curriculum provision in order to improve pupils' achievement. Early indications are that the more meticulous checks on how well pupils are progressing have already raised standards in English. The strong team spirit means most staff are willing to take on new initiatives and work to secure improvements. Governance is good: governors question and support the work of the school and this is leading to stronger provision.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Thank you for your help when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed watching you work and talking with you in your classes and around school. Your school provides satisfactory opportunities for you to learn and it takes good care of you. You work hard in lessons and are beginning to reach good standards but some of you could do even better. You have some fun times and we were particularly impressed with how you take care of each other and help your friends. You told us you are happy and your parents are particularly pleased you come to this school.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to carry on with their hard work and we suggest three ways we think will improve your school even further.

- Work even harder at your mathematics and tackle more difficult work.
- Have more practical activities in lessons where you try out what you have learned.
- Improve the way some of your teachers organise their lessons and ensure you all move forward quickly in your learning.

You are enthusiastic about your school and we hope you carry on enjoying lessons and helping your teachers keep Our Lady and St Joseph's Primary School a happy and successful place to learn.