

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Huddersfield

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107749
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	287905
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Dee Brigstock

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 on roll	
School	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J McGee
Headteacher	Mr A Parker
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001
School address	Grosvenor Road Dalton Huddersfield West Yorkshire HD5 9HU
Telephone number	01484 531669
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic primary school is a large school. It draws its pupils from a wider than usual socio-economic range and catchment area because of its religious status. A broadly average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or a statement of special educational need. Fewer pupils than usual come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Of these, an average proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Joseph's is a good school. It provides good value for money and has improved well since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy school, their behaviour is outstanding and they know how to stay fit and healthy. The overwhelming majority of parents support this view, one commenting: 'The school encapsulates everything that we as parents wish for.' The good care, guidance and support that pupils receive from school results in their good personal development and well-being, including good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils achieve well but this varies between year groups. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage but progress is better in the Nursery than in Reception because children's learning activities, particularly outdoors, are better suited to their age and maturity. In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress in learning to read and write and good progress in mathematics. By Year 2 standards are average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Some of the most capable pupils in Key Stage 1 do not achieve as well as they could in writing because the work set for them is no more challenging than it is for other pupils. Progress picks up to good in Key Stage 2 and accelerates rapidly in Years 5 and 6. This is where teachers use assessment information best to design challenging work for all pupils. By Year 6 standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Good overall teaching and the excellent, supportive relationships between all members of the school community provide a good, calm climate for learning. Pupils' above average attendance, their punctuality, good attitudes to work and the well above average standards they attain equip them extremely well for their future.

The curriculum is satisfactory rather than good, as the school suggests. This is because provision in the Foundation Stage is unequal between Reception and Nursery and, although the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is broad it lacks balance between subjects. Inspectors agree with the pupils who said they would like to do more art and music. Leaders recognise this. Pupils benefit from a good range of sporting activities out of school hours to promote their teamwork and fitness. They have a satisfactory range of visits and visitors to enrich their learning. Within the curriculum, there is excellent provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They are provided with an extremely wide range of intervention programmes to cater for their individual learning needs. Teaching assistants are highly competent and very well trained to deliver and measure the success of these programmes. As a result, all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress overall. Some make excellent progress and no longer need extra support. Pupils at an early stage of learning English also access some of these programmes to improve their language skills. They too make good progress. The school has good partnerships with external agencies to promote good progress, particularly for these groups of pupils.

Good leadership and management have resulted in significant success in raising standards. Leaders have gathered an excellent range of accurate assessment data, which staff, particularly in Key Stage 2, use effectively to raise pupils' achievement. However, the school development plan does not focus sharply enough on how progress is measured. Leaders, including governors, have made largely accurate evaluations of the school's work, although pupils' care, guidance and support is good rather than outstanding because pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not receive sufficient guidance on how to improve their writing. The standards that pupils reach by Year 6, their good achievement and leaders' willingness to improve further all demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing in Key Stage 1, particularly for the most capable pupils.
- Improve the curriculum in order to provide children in the Reception year with better learning opportunities and pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 with more opportunities to develop their skills in art and music.
- Within the school development plan, define how progress in raising standards is measured throughout the school in order to give leaders a clear view of the success achieved in making improvements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children enter Nursery with skills that are broadly average for their age. They rapidly improve their personal and social skills as they learn to share resources and play together. They have a good start in learning new skills in mathematics, reading and writing, although they progress better in the Nursery class than in Reception. This is because the curriculum is planned better to suit their age and levels of maturity. Standards in writing in Key Stage 1, though satisfactory, are not as high as in mathematics, because the curriculum opportunities for this are too restricted, especially for the more capable pupils. By Year 6 standards are well above average. Pupils achieve well in mathematics throughout the school because teachers' planning is good and their expectations of pupils' capabilities are high. In Year 6, at least a third of pupils have an excellent understanding of the links between fractions, decimals and percentages. Prompt and effective action improves the performance of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of speaking English. Targets set for pupils tell them what they have to do to improve further. These are most effective in Key Stage 2 because teachers use assessment information more accurately to set appropriately challenging work. The school analyses pupils' performance rigorously and has assessment data to show that pupils are on track to meet the demanding targets set for them in 2007 and 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school. They say: 'It rocks.' They speak positively about the good relationships with adults and among pupils. They enjoy school, as shown by their above average attendance. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are courteous and work well in small groups and pairs. Pupils on the school council have gained a good understanding of their roles and older pupils really enjoy helping to care for younger ones, for example on the playgrounds. As one younger pupil said, 'If you sit down lonely, then someone comes to help you out.' Pupils raise considerable amounts of money for charities, leading to their appreciation of other people's problems, and they develop respect for people different from themselves. They gain a satisfactory appreciation for life in a more diverse culture through links such as those with the Chinese and African-Caribbean communities. Pupils know about the importance of having a healthy diet which includes fruit and water, and the benefits of regular exercise. They appreciate the tasty, healthy school meals.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall with a strength in mathematics, but there are variations in the quality of teaching within the school, particularly in writing. There are examples of outstanding teaching and learning in Years 4, 5 and 6. Here pupils are mixed in sets to learn mathematics and English. The work planned for them catches their interest and exactly meets their learning needs, resulting in accelerated learning. However, in some classes, too many pupils complete the same writing tasks, and assessments are not used well to plan work for different groups of pupils. As a result, particularly in Key Stage 1, progress for the more capable pupils slips to satisfactory. Teaching assistants are well qualified and work closely alongside teachers. They contribute very effectively to pupils' learning, particularly for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils appreciate being allowed to work in small groups or in pairs to solve their problems because they say that this helps them learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is broad but not very well balanced because pupils, even in Reception, spend too much time on mathematics and English. Some of the writing opportunities offered to children in Reception and Key Stage 1 are too ordinary to enthuse them. The Nursery curriculum is good, with strong outdoor provision. Children learn to play and share well together and adults provide plenty of opportunities to develop pupils' independence. Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory; pupils are beginning to use a range of educational programs with confidence and independence. The school has rightly identified the need to sharpen up the focus on writing and music in order to make the curriculum more interesting, and older pupils say they would like to do more art and music, and have more group work in science. Pupils reach high standards in science and undertake several investigations, but the curriculum in art and music is very basic. Provision for sport is enhanced well by specialist teaching. A satisfactory range of visits to museums, and places of historic interest and the local environment help to bring history and geography more alive for pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for its pupils extremely well. All staff are committed to pupils' well-being and the positive atmosphere across school enables all pupils to feel valued. Procedures to help ensure that pupils are safeguarded are rigorous. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to support pupils' learning needs, and as a result, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities play a full part in school life and make at least good, and sometimes excellent, progress. Pupils' guidance on how to improve further is satisfactory. A new marking system has been put into place to inform pupils on what they do well and how they could improve. This new system is not yet firmly embedded throughout the school. Teachers sometimes make corrections which pupils do nothing about. There are very good procedures to track how well pupils are learning and how much progress they make each year. Where this information is used well to guide pupils' learning, their progress accelerates.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. One pupil said: 'The headteacher makes us happy. He has that presence around the school.' Good leadership has led to good achievement, good personal development and effective care, guidance and support. Almost all parents are fully supportive of the school. Leaders share a clear vision for school development that focuses on the benefits for pupils. They gather and analyse accurate data about pupils' standards and progress which are used to set future targets for the years ahead. Leaders, including governors, know the main strengths and weaknesses of the school. They know that the curriculum needs to be richer and that achievement in writing could improve for some of the most capable pupils. The school's development plan clearly identifies these priorities for development but how the school measures its success in achieving these aims is unspecified. This limits governors' ability to hold the school to account. Senior staff regularly look at pupils' books to see how they are doing and use the analyses of tests to find out which aspects of pupils' learning need a boost. However, the involvement of senior staff in monitoring classroom practice is only at an early stage.

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Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making us welcome in your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and looking at your work. We think you should be proud of your achievements. St Joseph's is a good school. You work hard and you make good progress.

Here are other aspects of the school that are particularly good.

- Your school is a very friendly, safe and pleasant place to be and you really enjoy attending.
- Everyone seems to get on well with one another. Your behaviour is excellent and you are growing up to be very articulate, healthy and fit young people.
- The Nursery is an exciting place to learn.
- By Year 6 your work in English, mathematics and science is very good. We are very impressed by how much you know about decimals, fractions and percentages.
- Those of you who find learning difficult get a lot of good help and make good progress.
- Your headteacher and teachers are doing a good job in always trying to make the school a little bit better.

I have asked your school to do three things to make it better still.

- Plan more varied work in writing in Years 1 and 2.
- Decide how the school is going to measure its progress against the targets it sets for the future.
- Make your curriculum more interesting. For example, have more art and music lessons and give children in Reception more lessons like the ones they have in Nursery.

I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Joseph's a good place to learn.