



St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109635
Local Authority LUTON
Inspection number 288461
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Kenneth Thomas

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Gardenia Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Luton
Age range of pupils	7–11		Bedfordshire LU3 2NS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 572964
Number on roll (school)	505	Fax number	01582 565845
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Christopher Till
		Headteacher	Mrs Jacqueline Lee
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is an above-average size junior school. Most pupils join the school after attending the neighbouring Catholic infant school. About 40% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are 30 children from families who are refugees or asylum seekers and 23 pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average, as is the proportion eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school achieved the Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards in 2006. Pupils' attainment on entry in Year 3 is above average overall. The headteacher took up her post in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges its effectiveness to be good and inspectors agree. It gives good value for money. The school's ethos is characterised by a strong commitment to providing an education which meets the needs of each individual, within a Catholic Christian framework. Pupils are educated in an environment based upon clear values and principles which are very much in evidence throughout the school and influence every aspect of school life. Relationships are excellent and pupils feel safe and secure because of the high quality support and guidance the school provides. Pupils understand the value of healthy lifestyles and make excellent contributions to the community. Pupils' personal development is outstanding as a result of excellent care, guidance and support and they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is recognized by the overwhelming majority of parents. As one parent wrote, 'I feel that there is a real sense of community in this school. It feels like a family and we have complete confidence in it.'

Leadership and management are good. The outstanding leadership of the new headteacher provides the driving force behind the school's improvement. Much has been done to make systems for checking the school's performance more rigorous and this has contributed to the rise in standards. All groups of pupils now make good progress and standards at the end of Year 6 are well above average. The school is on course to attain the more challenging targets that have been set for 2007. The headteacher receives good support from other members of the senior leadership team. However, the extent to which other senior leaders can support the drive for improvement is limited because of full teaching commitments. The responsibilities of subject leaders in evaluating and developing work in their subjects have been made much clearer. As a result, leadership in literacy, numeracy and special educational needs is particularly effective and is having a significant impact on standards. These good self review procedures are not yet fully embedded in the work of many other subject leaders.

Teaching is good and often outstanding. In this school pupils want to learn and, in many lessons, they make rapid progress because teaching captures their interest and imagination. However, in some lessons progress is slower because the learning activities are too demanding and learning is not consolidated before the next challenge is presented. A key reason for pupils' good progress is the very effective way in which assessment information is now being used to set targets and to monitor pupils' progress towards them. This has led to much higher expectations of academic standards among staff and pupils.

The good curriculum promotes achievement well. It is carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils, and particularly those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who are learning to speak English as an additional language. This makes a significant contribution to their good progress. The school works exceptionally well with other schools, agencies and with the community to enrich pupils' education and ensure their well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further enhance the quality of teaching by ensuring that learning tasks are well matched to pupils' attainment levels and that learning is consolidated before the next challenge is presented in all lessons.
- In order to sustain the current momentum of improvement, provide the senior leadership team with additional capacity to monitor, evaluate and support the work of the school.
- Embed the school's systems for monitoring and reviewing performance into the work of subject leaders so that they have greater responsibility for the quality of provision in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of pupils from all social and ethnic backgrounds is good. Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English, make good progress. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in Year 6 are now well above average. After a period in which performance in the Year 6 national tests in English was adversely affected by staffing difficulties, standards have risen. This is because staffing is now stable and the school's focus on writing, together with an emphasis on speaking and listening, is underpinning a rise in standards of literacy. In 2006 the school achieved the expected Level 4 targets set in English and mathematics. The school also achieved the higher Level 5 target set for mathematics, but not the higher target set for English. More effective use is now being made of assessment information and this is contributing to a rise in standards in all three core subjects. The school's targets for 2007 are more challenging and inspection evidence shows that pupils are currently on track to achieve them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent and they feel safe and enjoy school. The extent to which pupils enjoy school is not fully reflected in the average rate of attendance. This is because, despite the best efforts of the school, a number of parents take family holidays during term-time. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school is very successful in developing pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own and this makes a significant contribution to the happy atmosphere in the school and to community cohesion.

Pupils understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the availability of healthy options at lunchtimes effectively contributes to this. Pupils make an exceptionally good contribution to both the school and wider community, and raise funds for a variety of charities. Through links with local businesses older pupils are occasionally

given insights into the working environment. These activities contribute well to pupils' developing understanding of responsible citizenship. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education and are provided with a good basis for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Typically lessons have good pace, with a high level of challenge, and planning ensures that pupils build on previous knowledge in purposeful and manageable steps. In some exemplary lessons, pupils make rapid progress because teaching captures their imagination and allows them to be creative in their responses. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils, but occasionally this translates into tasks that are too difficult for some. In these lessons, pupils' progress is slower because not enough time is spent on ensuring learning is consolidated before the next activity is introduced. Pupils' work is regularly assessed to provide them with an indication of how they can achieve their next steps in learning. This, together with effective support from teaching assistants, ensures that pupils who are at the early stages of learning English and those with learning difficulties or disabilities can participate fully in lessons. 'Learning logs' provide an innovative way of integrating homework because they allow pupils to reinforce their understanding of concepts taught in lessons in creative and imaginative ways. The logs also allow parents increased opportunity to support their children's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with a particularly strong emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Careful planning provides a clear structure for the teaching of each subject. The school plans to review its overall curriculum to enhance links across different subjects. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, those learning English as an additional language, and those who are from minority ethnic groups are very carefully considered. This has a positive impact on the progress that all groups of pupils make. A carefully planned personal, social and health education programme helps to prepare pupils as socially aware young people. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. The curriculum is enriched by the provision of French from Year 3, as well as a good range of activities outside lessons, including many clubs and sporting activities. Music makes a significant contribution to the ethos of the school and, together with residential visits, visits to other places of interest and close links with the Diocese, contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' care, guidance and support are outstanding and clearly reflect the school's Catholic ethos. Together, they contribute to the good progress pupils make in their academic work and the excellent behaviour and attitudes they show. Pupils trust adults and feel safe and secure in school. Arrangements for child protection meet government requirements. Careful attention is paid to health and safety.

Support and guidance for pupils' academic development are highly effective. Assessment information is now being used more effectively to set targets and monitor pupils' progress. The sharing of success criteria with pupils is helping them to check their own progress, because as one said, 'It helps us to know how to improve our work.' Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, vulnerable pupils and those who are gifted and talented are very well supported. This underpins the good progress these pupils are making. The care taken to provide effective support for pupils in the early stages of English language acquisition, many of whom are recent arrivals from the expanded European Community, is a clear demonstration of the inclusive nature of the school. The school works closely with parents, carers and a range of external agencies to maximise pupils' learning at school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher shows outstanding leadership. Since taking up her appointment, she has fostered a strong team spirit and provided the school with a clear agenda for improvement. With very good support from the senior leadership team, successful management action is having a positive impact on standards. However, all other members of the senior leadership team have full teaching commitments and this limits their ability to provide the headteacher with the support needed to take the school forward at a faster rate. Systematic reviews of performance, together with rigorous evaluation procedures, provide an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Middle management is becoming more effective and there are examples of particularly effective management in literacy and numeracy. The school is aware that in order to sustain the drive for improvement, its rigorous evaluation procedures need to be implemented routinely in all areas. Staff feel that they are now more able to contribute to school improvement because they receive firm guidance on their responsibilities and accurate feedback on their performance. This, together with well planned professional development, is having a significant impact on standards. Governance of the school is good. Governors are very supportive and play an increasingly strategic role in monitoring the school's work and performance. Resources are managed well and financial management is good.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 February 2007

Dear Pupils,

St Joseph's Catholic Junior School, Gardenia Avenue, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU3 2NS

Following our visit to inspect your school I am now writing to tell you what we found out. Before I do, I would like to say thank you for making us feel so welcome and making our visit so pleasant. We have told your teachers how you were all so helpful and polite. Through our chats with you, it was good to hear how much you enjoy school and the after-school clubs and other activities that are available for you.

Our main finding is that this is a good school and one that is helping you to do really well. This will not be a surprise to you because this is what you and your parents also say. You told us how, in most of your lessons, teachers and other staff make learning challenging but fun and this helps you to make good progress. In a few lessons some of you find the work a little bit too hard and we have asked your teachers to make sure that you really understand everything before moving on to a new task. We particularly liked looking at the work you have done at home in your 'learning logs'. It is clear from the very good quality of the work in the logs that you really like the way you can be creative when you do your homework. The care and support the school provides are excellent and this is particularly true for those of you who may be experiencing difficulties. You are helped to learn about the importance of keeping fit and staying healthy and safe. Another real strength is the way in which Mrs Lee and her staff run the school and help to make it such a good place to learn. In order to make it even better, we have asked Mrs Lee and the governors to provide more time for senior staff to check on how well the school is doing and for subject co-ordinators to be more involved in checking work in the subjects they are responsible for.

But you are also key players in the school's success. Your excellent behaviour, hard work and the care you show each other, together with willingness to take on responsibility all help to make St Joseph's such a happy and successful community. Mrs Lee, the staff and governors all want the school to carry on getting better and better. Having met you we know you will all want to continue to play your part as well.

With best wishes for your future success.

Dr Kenneth C Thomas Lead Inspector