



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115173
Local Authority THURROCK
Inspection number 290153
Inspection dates 1–2 February 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Scratton Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Stanford-le-Hope
Age range of pupils	4–11		Essex SS17 0PA
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01375 672217
Number on roll (school)	265	Fax number	01375 640095
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr J Flitcroft
		Headteacher	Mr J Peoples
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is of average size. Around three quarters of the pupils come from Catholic families and the children's attainment on entry is in line with national expectations. The local population served by the school represents a wide mix of social backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils are mostly of White British heritage. One pupil is at the early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is average. The intake each year is over 30, so many of the classes have pupils from two year groups. The school has been awarded Investors in People status, the Active Mark award and has two School Achievement Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that is improving rapidly. There are some outstanding aspects to its work, especially in the support and welfare it provides for its pupils. It gives good value for money. Almost all the parents are very pleased with the education that their children are enjoying: 'It is a fabulous school. We are lucky to be able to send our children here.'

Standards have risen significantly over the past three years, as a result of an increasing focus on attainment, excellent teaching of the Years 5/6 classes and the outstanding support and guidance that pupils receive. Currently, pupils' attainment is above average in Year 2 and in Year 6 and pupils are achieving well.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, because of the excellence of the school at caring for and nurturing children. The pupils recognise this. When asked what makes the school special, they say, 'The children make it special. We try to be friendly and kind and all are treated the same.' They are treated with great respect and so learn to be helpful and considerate in return. Their behaviour is excellent, because teachers manage their classes very well. Relationships are excellent, so that pupils want to succeed to please their teachers. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are planned well to include work that is appropriate for the different ages and abilities in the classes. This, along with the thorough and helpful marking, leads to pupils making good, and sometimes excellent, progress.

Pupils develop a particularly good understanding of how to lead a healthy life, through excellent opportunities for physical education and for healthy eating. They know how to keep themselves safe through the outstanding personal, social and health education programme and they make excellent contributions to the community. Their good progress in basic skills provides a strong foundation for their future well-being. The curriculum is outstanding and enables all to succeed. As a result, pupils love coming to school and attendance is above average.

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features. Aspects of management are excellent. The headteacher has created an environment in which all who work in the school are valued and helped to succeed. The systems for tracking pupils' progress are now good, but in recent times prevented the senior team from having a clear view of the progress that the younger pupils made. There is evidence that some, whilst in Years 3 and 4, made insufficient progress and this was not recognised at the time. Issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. Given the greatly improved standards, and the good quality of teaching and leadership in the school, it is exceptionally well placed to become even more effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the new tracking systems for monitoring the progress made by pupils are used consistently by all teachers to set targets and monitor pupils' progress towards meeting them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start school with standards that are in line with those expected for their age. Pupils achieve well so that, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. They were higher in 2006, when standards were well above average and pupils made excellent progress. The variation is the result of the inconsistent tracking systems that the school was using, that were not picking up underachievement from some pupils in Years 3 and 4. This problem has been identified and largely rectified.

Pupils make good progress in Reception and through Year 1 and 2. Almost all reach the expected level for their age by the end of Year 2, when overall attainment is above average, although the numbers attaining the higher levels are relatively low. By the end of Year 6, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher level, Level 5, are much higher than the average nationally in English, mathematics and science.

Girls attain higher standards than boys, as is the case nationally, but boys and girls both make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who are gifted or talented achieve well, because teachers are very aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses and plan to meet their needs. The school in its self evaluation stated that pupils make outstanding progress. This is based on the 2006 results, when the school exceeded its targets, but over recent years achievement has been good, rather than outstanding.

Standards are well above expectations in physical education, music and religious education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils and adults show great respect and consideration for others. Pupils greatly enjoy school. Their behaviour and concentration is generally excellent and they are extremely positive about the many things they do. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are very sensitive to the needs of others and are developing outstanding social skills.

Pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy life. They participate in regular physical education and swimming lessons and know about healthy eating, with many choosing healthy meal options at lunchtime. Pupils have a very good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. They contribute positively to the community through charitable fund raising. Older pupils take on additional responsibility through the school council, as buddies to support and help the youngest children and by helping to run the school office at lunchtime. Pupils' good progress in basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) provides a firm foundation for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most pupils make good progress in interesting, well-taught lessons. Common strengths of the teaching are good use of teaching assistants to support learning, effective planning to meet the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities in the same class, and very good questioning which extends pupils' knowledge. Where teaching is outstanding, there are high expectations of pupils' progress and challenging activities are provided with effective support. Pupils' work is marked well with constructive feedback given to pupils about what to improve and next steps. In a few cases, there is a lack of concentration by some pupils and this slows their rate of progress. This is because the pupils' enthusiasm to be involved and answer questions can make them excited and restless. A few teachers need to manage their classes more effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because of the individual support programmes that are devised for them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent because it has the richness and breadth to meet the needs of all learners. Subjects are covered in considerable depth so that pupils are enthusiastic about learning, responding well to a range of teaching and learning styles. The school provides an outstanding range of extra curricular activities and almost all older pupils take part. There are excellent links between subjects that help pupils to learn. For example, whilst learning French in the ICT suite, pupils also develop reading, listening, speaking and ICT skills.

There are significant opportunities for enrichment in music, art and physical education. The children sing beautifully and they are very proud of their sports teams. This year the football team has been particularly successful. Parental involvement in supporting the curriculum is a strength of the school and significantly enhances provision for pupils. The outside learning area for reception children is small and the school is working on plans to develop it further. Teachers organise activities to ensure that this does not have an adverse effect on the children's education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and support provided is excellent, because all adults know the pupils very well and very good attention is given to ensuring they are safe. There is very effective and close liaison with families to ensure that all aspects of pupils' well-being are met very well indeed. Support for the pupils' personal development is outstanding and as a result pupils are happy at school and relationships are excellent.

Risk assessments are completed to ensure pupils learn in a safe environment. Child protection procedures are firmly in place and staff know how to raise any concerns they may have. Strengths include the effective school council and the excellent 'buddy' scheme. Pupils with special responsibilities wear their special badges with pride. Parents are very pleased with the care and guidance given to their children. The school provides very well for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Teachers have good systems for assessing pupils in English and mathematics, and the information is used well to match the work to meet pupils' needs. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and the individual targets, set regularly, help pupils to understand how to improve their work and make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, with some outstanding aspects. The headteacher's focus on raising attainment has led to significantly improved test results over the past three years. The senior team's focus on improved guidance and marking has contributed to this. The school's processes for monitoring teaching and learning are very effective. They are praised by teachers. They recognise that the quality of the feedback they have received from the headteacher, along with the support that they have had for peer and self-evaluation, have increased their confidence as well as competence. School self-evaluation procedures are good and the views of parents, governors, staff and pupils make an important contribution. New systems have been introduced that are enabling the school to improve the monitoring of pupils' progress.

Subject leaders look in detail at the quality of pupils' work and monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects very effectively. The headteacher is supported very well indeed by the staff and governors who have high expectations for continued improvement. The governing body is supportive of the school, has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and fulfils its function as a critical friend well. Taking account of the recent significant improvements, the school's capacity to improve further is excellent.

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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 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?	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	2
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?	1
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	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	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

2 February 2007

Dear Pupils

The School Council, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Scratton Road, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex

Thank you very much for all the help you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and visiting your lessons. You told us that everyone is made to feel welcome at your school and we agree. You also told us that your teachers are kind, that you enjoy learning and that you feel safe. These are some of the things that make this a good school. Other good aspects are:

- We think you work hard and the standard of your work is better than in many schools by the time you leave Year 6.
- Your teachers plan interesting and enjoyable lessons for you.
- Your headteacher, the deputy headteacher and all the staff are doing a good job in improving the school and making it an even better place for you.

There are some things about your school that are outstanding:

- Your behaviour is excellent. We think having Year 6 buddies is a really good idea and they are helping you all to get on well with each other.
- The ways that you are supported and helped are very good indeed.

We have suggested something that will help make the school even better...

- We think the school needs to be more sure about the progress that you are making as you move through the school.

Thank you again for being so helpful. You told us that the children are one of the things that makes this such a special school and we agree!

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

(Lead Inspector)