



# St Joseph's In The Park

Independent School

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Inspection report

DfES registration number	919/6099
Unique reference number	117629
Inspection number	296870
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector	Mrs Pauline Allison HMI

Inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Inspection funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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Age group 3-11	Published 19 February 2007	Reference no. 296870
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

St Joseph's In The Park is a non-selective independent school for pupils aged from three to eleven years old. There are 170 pupils on roll. It was established on its current rural setting near Hertford in 1957. The school is set within large grounds which include woodland. Most of the accommodation is purpose built and there are specialist teaching rooms for some areas of the curriculum. Some of these rooms are in a converted stable block. Provision at the school includes a Pre-School Department containing nursery and kindergarten classes, three infant classes and four classes for pupils in the junior age range. Provision for pupils in receipt of Nursery funding was inspected separately and is reported at the end of this report. The school makes specialist provision in 'Woodlands', the school's centre for pupils who have specific learning difficulties. The school aims to focus on each child's academic and personal development and move them on to becoming independent learners through providing a 'broad and lively' curriculum and a 'relaxed but purposeful' atmosphere.

## Evaluation of the school

St Joseph's In The Park School successfully meets its aims of ensuring each pupil's academic and personal development. It provides a good quality of education and care with some outstanding features. This ensures that pupils gain in confidence and make good progress in all aspects of school life. As one parent wrote: *'It is a very happy school full of enthusiastic and lively children.'* The school meets almost all the requirements.

## Quality of education

The school provides a good quality curriculum with an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils who attend the well-managed provision in Woodlands, including those who have a statement of special educational need, benefit from a curriculum which closely meets their needs. A range of displays around the school demonstrates the breadth of the curriculum. The school has an excellent range of reading books and non-fiction, and the resources available to support the curriculum are good. Visits and visitors bring this curriculum to life, and there are good opportunities to develop multicultural understanding.

Pupils visit an African village where they learn about music, dance, cookery and dress. In their topic work on China, pupils gain an understanding of the culture and celebrate it by having a Chinese meal. Further enrichment is provided by specialist teachers in some subjects such as music and art. Music is very important to school life and there are very good opportunities for pupils to be part of school choirs and to learn musical instruments. An outstanding range of after-school clubs is offered to pupils from the Reception class upwards and pupils in junior classes have a weekly 'Kaleidoscope' of activities. Specialist staff are employed to provide activities such as ballet, French, drama and short tennis. These activities are popular with pupils and take-up is excellent. School staff run a wide range of sporting activities including clubs for football, netball, athletics, gymnastics and rounders.

The quality of teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Teachers consistently use their time well and maintain a good pace. In the best lessons teachers build on prior learning and ensure time is spent explaining where pupils do not understand. They use well-chosen questions which provide excellent opportunities for pupils to contribute their opinions. There are good opportunities for pupils to work in groups, for example when using tuned percussion instruments, although these opportunities are not always used to full advantage in junior classes and this sometimes inhibits creativity and independent learning. Teaching in the infant department offers imaginative opportunities to enjoy and learn. Examples of this were seen in role play and when the teacher took pupils out to feel, touch, smell and see the snow and observe changes in the playground. Woodlands provides excellent opportunities for pupils with specific learning difficulties to receive support focussed on their individual needs and to make good progress. The school has a considerable number of learning support assistants who help pupils, mainly with reading. Particularly good support is provided for pupils who have learning difficulties. Pupils' work is regularly marked, and, in the best practice, contains helpful comments which ensure that pupils know what they have to do to improve.

The school has a clear and purposeful focus on preparing pupils for secondary education, in particular for achieving as highly as possible in the Key Stage 2 tests and in being well prepared for entrance examinations to selective schools. The strong focus on literacy and numeracy makes a good contribution to preparing pupils for their future economic wellbeing. Pupils are confident speakers and have many opportunities to practise these skills. Planning for all subjects is good. The school assesses pupils using a wide range of published testing materials as well as using the Foundation Stage profile and the end of key stage tests. By careful tracking the school is able to demonstrate the good progress made by all pupils. Staff are also able to identify pupils who need additional support and pinpoint the specific areas where this support is needed. All pupils have targets set for them and are clear about what they need to do to meet these targets. In addition, pupils who have learning difficulties have individual education plans (IEPs) written in a child-friendly format which identify

what they need to do to reach their targets and set out how they will be helped. In some cases greater detail is needed of how staff will help pupils to meet their targets.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision to promote these aspects of the pupils' development is outstanding. The school is right to be proud of the emphasis it places on developing the whole child. Spiritual development is promoted well through religious education lessons and assemblies, and there are good opportunities for pupils to reflect, for example on miracles, and what it means to be a saint. There is a strong moral dimension to the school. Pupils are taught to behave well and to have respect for others; classroom rules are on display and expectations for behaviour are clear. As a result, pupils' behaviour, including that of the youngest children, is outstanding. Staff provide very good models of behaviour, in a friendly and relaxed way, and pupils value their support and guidance. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are excellent.

Social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and appreciate the outstanding opportunities that are available for them to join in a range of additional activities. They have excellent opportunities to work together, for example in dramatic productions, musical activities, including a long-established choir, and in sports teams. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, for example as house and sports captains. Rewards, such as stickers and house points, are given and pupils' achievements are celebrated formally in assemblies and in a bound book kept on display. Personal and social achievements and taking a pride in appearance are acknowledged, as well as effort and achievement in work. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute their views in lessons and appreciate the opportunities provided by the School Council.

The school has a wide programme of visits, including residential trips and specially planned trips for pupils attending Woodlands. These trips and the input from outside visitors greatly enhance pupils' cultural understanding. Examples of recent, or planned, trips include: theatre visits, an overnight stay at the Science Museum, 'Kip in a ship' on HMS Belfast, a trip to Kew Gardens linked to food and healthy eating and a visit to a local mill to make bread. From an early age pupils learn about diversity and show respect for other cultures. An awareness of those from other cultures and faiths is seen, for example in the work on Chinese culture and by studying the major world faith groups.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. Parents are appreciative of the good care and supervision which staff provide during the school day. Pupils are completely confident that they can tell staff about any concerns they have and that staff will address these. Any incidents or accidents are recorded appropriately. Issues about personal safety are promoted through the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. When making trips, the school makes risk assessments and plans thoroughly. There is good promotion of healthy living, through science and PSHE lessons, and through the annual 'Healthy Meals' competition. Pupils have sufficient healthy options at lunch time, and healthy snacks are available at break and for those attending the breakfast club. There are excellent opportunities to take exercise. The school has regard to the Disability Discrimination Act (2002) and has drawn up a three-year accessibility plan. Not all staff are fully up to date with the school's policy on safeguarding children and the school intends to provide further training. The school has not yet developed a policy to ensure safe use of the Internet.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has had a recent change in the chair of the governing body and the new chairperson is currently subject to the mandatory check by the Secretary of State with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm his suitability. The school has introduced new procedures for vetting and appointing staff which fully meet requirements.

## School's premises and accommodation

The overall quality of the accommodation is good and the availability of specialist rooms, such as the science laboratory, is very helpful. However the design and technology room is very small and does not offer any significant advantage in delivering the curriculum. Pupils have a large and well resourced playground and enjoy the benefits of supervised play in the large woodland area. There are plans to improve sports facilities and to improve designated parking areas. The school does not provide an appropriate area for pupils who are ill.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a wide range of information for parents, including a very well structured website and regular, detailed reports. There is an 'open door'

policy and parents are able to approach the school about any concerns easily. There are opportunities for them to attend assemblies and other events.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clear complaints policy which fully meets the requirements.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- fully implement its written policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that all IEPs set out clearly how staff will help pupils meet their targets
- re-locate the facilities for design and technology.

## Inspection of funded nursery education

### Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an exceptionally competent understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn through play. They consistently deliver a diverse range of inspirational practical age-appropriate activities. This motivates children's interest and desire to learn. Levels of attainment are superb. Staff make excellent use of individual profiles to plot the next stages in children's learning. Highly innovative teaching, rigorous tracking systems and well-planned and executed activities ensure children make rapid progress through the stepping stones, given their age, ability and starting points.

Significant emphasis is given to promotion of social and moral skills. Staff recognise the importance of nurturing self-esteem as happy children, who behave well, are more readily prepared to learn. Children relish their time in the school. They exude confidence in abundance. Children have positive attitudes to new experiences and willingly contribute their thoughts and ideas. They display exceptional stage presence when practising their St George's Day assembly. Very young children competently deliver a convincing performance of their depicted characters. This includes reciting memorised lines. Children have excellent relationships with each other and staff. They are respectful of differences in opinion. Children's spiritual, moral and social development is fostered.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. The quality of the educational curriculum is enhanced through a unified skilled team who work collaboratively with senior management and the wider school community and ethos. This ensures a cohesive approach to learning and progression. The unit coordinator is highly experienced and committed to promotion of high standards of education. Previous areas high-lighted for development have been addressed. The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive funded nursery education is outstanding. They receive an extensive range of informative literature about the curriculum and their children's attainments. The needs of the children are met.



## School details

Name of school	St Joseph's In The Park		
DfES number	919/6099		
Unique reference number	117629		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY239667		
Type of school	Primary school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1957		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 81	Girls: 65	Total: 146
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 10	Total: 24
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 13	Girls: 23	Total: 36
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,876 – Pre-school £7,908 – Infants £8,061 – Juniors £11,982 - Woodlands		
Address of school	St Joseph's In The Park The Park St Mary's Lane Hertingfordbury Hertford Hertfordshire SG14 2LX		
Telephone number	01992 581378		
Fax number	01992 505202		
Email address	admin@stjosephsinthepark.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Adrian Platt		
Proprietor	Mr Paul Chappell		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Pauline Allison HMI		
Childcare inspector	Ms Paula Durrant CCI		
Dates of inspection	24–25 January 2007		