

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Pickering

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121654
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314072
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Les Schubeler

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	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Bill East
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Macklam
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Swainsea Lane Pickering North Yorkshire YO18 8AR
Telephone number	01751 473102
Fax number	01751 473102

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Inspection number	314072

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a smaller than average school serving a market town and the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of those entitled to free school meals is below average. There are three mixed-age classes in addition to the Nursery and Reception classes. A part-time acting headteacher was in post during the term preceding the inspection. A new headteacher took up the post at the beginning of the current term. The school has received the Investors in People award, the Special Needs Quality mark and the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Joseph's is a satisfactory and improving school. There are good features to its work, which include notable strengths in the personal development of its pupils, the high level of care and support and provision in the Foundation Stage. The headteacher, governors and other staff know that their key task is to raise standards and they are working hard to make sure that all pupils achieve as well as they should.

The school is friendly and welcoming. It places a high priority on promoting the well-being of its pupils. Its success can be seen in pupils' positive attitudes to school, their enjoyment of lessons and their sensible behaviour. The staff know pupils well and make time to listen to them. This helps pupils to feel valued members of the school community. The pastoral care provided for pupils is a strength and they receive good guidance to help them improve their work. This is a very caring school. Effective work is undertaken with outside agencies to provide the right support and expertise for vulnerable pupils, demonstrated by the award of the Special Needs Quality mark.

The number of children who enter the Foundation Stage each year is small. Their skills and abilities tend to vary from year to year. Children make a good start in the Nursery and continue their good progress during the Reception class. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen in the last two years and in 2007 they were above average. However, in the last two years at Key Stage 2 the standards reached have represented levels of achievement that were below average in 2006 and significantly below average in 2007. The acting headteacher last term and the recently appointed headteacher both quickly identified the need to improve pupils' achievement at Key Stage 2. Swift action has been taken to ensure that assessment procedures are used more rigorously. The school has introduced effective tracking systems that are making teachers focus closely on the progress of individual pupils. This is important because the monitoring of pupils' progress has hitherto not been sufficiently rigorous. Pupils are now more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and are developing a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. As a result of this stronger focus, especially at Key Stage 2, they are beginning to accelerate their rate of progress. Current standards are average and achievement is now satisfactory throughout the school.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers relate well to their pupils. They strive to make lessons interesting by using a good range of teaching strategies and planning well for the varied needs of their pupils in mixed-age classes. However, they do not always present enough challenge for the more able pupils and not enough pupils have reached the higher levels in the national tests at the end of Year 6.

Parents place a high value on the work of the school and their views are typified by those who praise the 'family-like feel to the school' or who say their children 'never want to miss a day.' They comment that, 'Each child is valued for who they are and for the individual talents they have.'

As parents and school staff recognise, the new headteacher is having a positive impact on the development of a new culture in the school. Achievement is now at the forefront of its priorities. Middle managers are experiencing a growing cohesiveness that is empowering them to monitor, evaluate and be accountable for their subject areas more frequently and more rigorously. The headteacher is providing good leadership and clear direction, but not enough time has elapsed to measure the full impact of new measures on pupils' outcomes. Therefore, leadership and

management are currently satisfactory overall. However, there is a common purpose to the school's actions and processes that augurs well for the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children improve their personal, social and emotional skills quickly. They lose little time in being integrated into school routines so that they form firm friendships, feel confident in working and playing together and enjoy school from the start. They achieve well overall and make particularly good progress in the development of their mathematical skills.

Provision is well led and managed. Children's development is regularly assessed and progress towards their targets is carefully measured. When they leave the Reception class, most are working at the levels expected for their age, although in 2007 the proportion of pupils working beyond the expected levels was high. Children make good progress because the teaching is well planned and continuously builds on what they already know. Strengths in the teaching include good relationships and a strong focus on care and children's well-being. These qualities inspire confidence in parents, whose appreciation of the good quality education their children receive in their early years is based on the 'real family atmosphere' where the children 'love school and therefore love learning.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that able pupils are sufficiently challenged so that they reach higher levels at the end of Year 6.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress across the school. At the end of Year 2, standards have improved in the last two years and in 2007 pupils reached above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in Year 6 have varied from above average to average over the last four years, which is a common effect where there are small numbers of pupils in each year. Last year, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science was average. Their achievement, however, declined significantly, especially in mathematics and science, and targets were missed, particularly at the higher level. The school did not do enough to challenge the more able pupils and paid insufficient attention to the progress that pupils made.

This year, pupils are making faster progress because teachers have analysed the main weaknesses in pupils' learning and put a closer focus on the achievement of individual pupils. By carefully tracking pupils' progress and discussing it with them, they are enabling pupils to gain a better understanding of what they could achieve and how to reach their realistic but challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils understand the importance of looking after themselves through eating healthily and exercising frequently. Lunches are healthy and popular. Pupils feel safe and know that there are adults they can confidently turn to if they have any concerns. They speak highly of the friendly environment, the care they show to one another and the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Consequently, behaviour is good and attendance is above average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils know right from wrong. Parents comment that children develop into well-rounded individuals because of the positive atmosphere in school. Pupils are enthusiastic about contributing to the school's development through the school council, as monitors and helpers. The school has good links with local schools and the Church and plays a full part in the local community. Pupils leave the school adequately prepared academically and well prepared personally for the challenges ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers make lessons interesting. They provide a wide range of resources for pupils to use. Well deployed teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning because they reinforce ideas, ask pertinent questions and prompt responses in such a way that pupils learn more quickly.

Relationships in the classroom are good and there is a clear focus to most lessons so that pupils understand what is required of them. Teachers are quickly coming to terms with new forms of assessment and target setting that are involving pupils more actively in their learning. This is beginning to have a beneficial effect on pupils' progress. Teachers' planning places emphasis on matching activities to the needs of specific individuals or groups. The school recognises, however, that more needs to be done in order for these procedures to have a greater impact on pupils' outcomes across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that generally meets pupils' needs. However, the needs of the more able pupils have not always been met and levels of achievement have suffered accordingly.

Themed days enrich pupils' learning in art, music and health issues. Cafod Green day, for example, developed pupils' awareness of recycling issues and provided them with the opportunity to raise funds for worthy causes. A residential visit to an outdoor pursuits centre adds to pupils' enjoyment of school life and helps them to develop teamwork skills. Visits to Beningbrough Hall enhance pupils' understanding of parts of their cultural heritage, while a multicultural day enables pupils to broaden their knowledge of cultures other than those in the immediate surroundings. Good links with the community police and the fire service contribute valuably to pupils' awareness of how to stay safe. As befits a school with Healthy School status, encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles is well promoted through physical education and science lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff provide pupils with a supportive learning environment. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Teaching assistants work effectively with the lower attaining pupils in classes. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good individual support. Their needs are carefully identified and appropriate support programmes are provided to enable them to make progress at the same rate as their peers. There are good links with outside agencies to support pupils who have particular social or emotional needs.

The school has made significant strides forward in improving its academic guidance for pupils. Teachers' marking of work, although there are some inconsistencies, provides pupils with a broad idea of how well they are performing. Pupils now have individual targets to work towards. They are quickly developing a good understanding of the next steps they need to take in order to reach those targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

In a short time, the school's new leaders have established effective self-evaluation processes and initiated appropriate action in response to the recent record of underachievement at Key Stage 2. More time is needed to see sustained improvement, but staff have responded positively and they all recognise the need for rigour if the school is to come close to meeting the challenging targets set for 2008. The governors make a satisfactory contribution to school improvement. They are supportive, hold the school to account and help to ensure that the school provides satisfactory value for money. Productive links with other schools have been forged to develop pupils' skills and learning in physical education and modern foreign languages, for example.

The commitment of all staff, coupled with the early, encouraging signs of improvement in achievement levels, indicates a satisfactory capacity to improve further. The school can look to the future with confidence.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
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 the warm welcome you gave to me when I visited your school recently. I would like to thank you for being so courteous and friendly. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to your views about the school. I spent a lot of time finding out how well you learn in your lessons, looking at your work and talking to your headteacher and school staff. I came to the conclusion that St Joseph's is a satisfactory and improving school.

I think your teachers and teaching assistants care for you and look after you well. This helps to keep you safe and healthy. I know, too, that you enjoy school and taking part in the extra activities that are arranged for you.

It was very pleasing to see that you get on well with one another and all the adults who work with you. I was impressed by the consideration shown by the older pupils to the younger ones. I think that you are working well. Now that you have been set targets you are beginning to make faster progress than before and many of you were able to tell me what you need to do next to improve your work in English and mathematics. I have asked your teachers to give all of you work that is really challenging and ensure that all those pupils with the potential to reach the higher levels have the opportunity to do so.

I am sure that you will carry on enjoying school and continue to build on the improvements that you are making now. Most of all, I hope that you will continue to work hard and help all the staff to make St Joseph's an even better school in the future.