

St Josephs RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106254
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	324358
Inspection date	28 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Joe Peacock

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	152
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Fleming
Headteacher	Mrs Sheila Partington
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Market Street Mossley Ashton-under-Lyne Lancashire OL5 0ES
Telephone number	01457 832360
Fax number	01457 832360

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress children make in the different areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage; standards in reading by Year 2 and in science by Year 6 especially for more able pupils; and governors' role in evaluating school effectiveness.

Evidence was collected from the school's self evaluation form, nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff who have management responsibilities, the chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence that the school's own assessments of these aspects, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Situated in a small market town, this smaller than average school serves a semi-rural area in the foothills of the Pennines. It has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage with a part-time Nursery and Reception children in a mixed-age class with Year 1 pupils. Just less than 1% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has a Bronze Eco Award.

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 Primary is a good school with some outstanding features and is providing good value for money. The staff work effectively as a team to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and that all, including the very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds benefit from an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. Parents' positive responses confirm their appreciation for the efforts of the staff. Comments such as 'couldn't ask for better' and 'loves school' reflect their strong support and the caring and friendly atmosphere in school.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, as it was in the previous inspection. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. 'Even looks forward to going in the holidays' is a typical comment from parents. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly. However, attendance is currently average, mainly because of the long-term absence of a few pupils who have been very ill. Community spirit is strong and relationships are excellent reflecting the many opportunities for pupils to work and play together. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around school. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. The school's strong links with outside agencies ensure that individual needs, such as those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils are well met. Pupils have an excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle, reinforced through the science curriculum and the many opportunities to take part in a range of competitive sporting activities. They are proud of the school's recent success in a local Chess competition. All pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, gaining valuable skills from the good curriculum on offer and wide range of after school activities such as the choir and break-dancing.

Pupils' achievement is good throughout. The school has improved the accommodation for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the previous inspection with a new Nursery class. However, the new classroom has taken up valuable outdoor space. Consequently, the outdoor area is very small and limits the type and range of equipment available to support children's learning. This in turn makes the outdoor provision less effective than indoors in successfully promoting the different learning in all areas. Children enter Nursery with skills broadly in line with the expectations for their age. They make good progress because of the good quality of teaching and the curriculum and often enter Year 1 with above average skills in all areas of learning.

Progress and achievement are good during Key Stage 1 and standards are typically above average. However, in the 2008 national assessments, overall standards were average in reading, writing and mathematics with fewer than expected attaining at the higher Level 3 especially in reading. The school has implemented effective strategies such as additional sessions to learn letter sounds and more immediate individual support for pupils who are struggling. Currently, standards are above average with pupils making good progress from their individual starting points. Pupils maintain good progress throughout Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6 standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' good achievement has mostly been maintained for the past three years. In the 2008, national tests, however, standards in science dipped as a result of changes to the curriculum when the school introduced more opportunities for pupils to investigate for themselves and ran out of time to cover all the necessary topics.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is largely responsible for the well above average standards being maintained by Year 6. Most teachers expect pupils to do well and tailor their

teaching to ensure pupils of all ages and abilities in the mixed-age classes achieve their targets. However, in a few lessons, the tasks set for more able pupils are not sufficiently challenging and a number of these pupils said how easy they found the work. Learning slows down on these occasions. Effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning. Year 3 and 4 pupils really enjoyed using a programmable toy to learn compass directions and angles, for example. Teachers assess pupils' progress carefully and are quick to identify any not making the expected progress. Additional support is quickly made available to these pupils. Pupils are becoming reliable in accurately assessing their progress towards individual targets.

Leadership and management are good. The school is effectively led by an experienced headteacher and deputy. It is a strong, cohesive community because of the shared commitment to pupils by a caring staff who work well as a team. Current government safeguarding requirements are met. There are good links with the local community and a school in Zambia. The strength in promoting languages such as French and Spanish adds further to pupils' knowledge of the international community. Good delegation of responsibilities has led to teachers with subject responsibilities forming an accurate picture of how well the school is doing. Relevant priorities for improvement have been identified. Governance is good. Many governors are recently appointed and settling in but all are deeply committed to the school, knowledgeable and keen to develop their role in helping the school evaluate its effectiveness. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The regular communication with parents and the caring, safe and supportive environment ensures children settle quickly and do well. All staff work effectively as a team to ensure individual children have the encouragement and attention they need to enjoy the good range of exciting and challenging activities planned for them. Clear routines provide structure and stability and children show a developing degree of confidence. All display positive attitudes to learning. Reception children thoroughly enjoyed using the interactive whiteboard to play a fishing game when learning mathematics skills, for example. By the end of Reception, the good quality of teaching and learning have ensured that the vast majority make good progress and many children's skills exceed the expectations for their age in all areas of learning. Children are well cared for and effectively supported in their learning enabling all, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to make good progress. Staff try to compensate for the limitations placed on them by the small outdoor learning area by using the space and large apparatus in the main school hall. At present, however, the lack of space for larger equipment and wheeled toys is limiting the challenge and stimulation for children when learning outdoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers consistently plan work that is challenging enough for more able pupils.
- Improve opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to learn outdoors.

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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
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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 being so friendly and helpful to me and my colleague during the inspection. We really enjoyed visiting your school and finding out how well you work and learn. It was pleasing to see from the inspection questionnaire how much your parents appreciate the close relationships they have with staff and all that is provided to make school enjoyable for you.

You go to a good school that has excellent features. There is so much for you to do especially outside of normal lessons with all your sporting activities, choir, chess and break-dancing! You told us that staff take really good care of you. We could see how well you get on with your teachers and how much you like school. We were impressed with your outstanding behaviour and concentration in lessons, even when some of your tasks were rather too easy for you.

Children in the Nursery and Reception unit get off to a good start and make good progress as they enjoy exciting activities in class. It is a pity that the outdoor area is so small. We have asked the school to explore ways of making it bigger and ensuring that the children have just as many interesting things to do there, as in class. All of you in school make good progress with standards above average by Year 2 and well above by Year 6. We have asked your teachers to make sure you always have to think hard and that none of you find work too easy.

We found that all staff are doing a good job, working hard as a team to improve your school. We hope that you will continue enjoying school and win even more of the competitions that you enter.