

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124763
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328209
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs J M Beswick
Date of previous school inspection	28 February–1 March 2006
School address	Beaconsfield Road Sudbury Suffolk CO10 1JP
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He visited nine lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. He observed the school's work, and looked at the school's improvement plans, self-evaluation documents, pupils' assessment information and key policies including those for safeguarding pupils' welfare. He also took account of parents' responses in 42 questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the overall progress of pupils in Key Stage 2, and in writing throughout the school
- the achievement of pupils with English as an additional language
- teaching and learning and how it can be improved to raise standards further
- how the school is preparing for its transition to a 4-11 primary school and the change of headteacher.

Information about the school

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is smaller than most primary schools and educates pupils from Sudbury and surrounding villages. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds although there is a growing minority from a range of other backgrounds. A broadly average proportion does not have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and at the time of the inspection none had a statement of special educational need. A well below average proportion of the pupils are known to qualify for free school meals. The number of pupils who leave or join the school at other than the usual times is below that of similar schools nationally although it does have a significant impact in certain year groups. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a Reception class. Most children's knowledge and skills on entry to the school are broadly in line with those expected nationally. The school has recently achieved the Activemark in recognition of its work in physical education through a Sports Partnership with a local secondary school.

School staff manage a before school club for up to 20 pupils. The school is currently undergoing consultations regarding a planned change of status to the full primary age range in three years' time.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School provides a good education for its pupils so that they make good progress. There are outstanding features, such as pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their behaviour, as well as in the way the school supports, guides and cares for the pupils. The school is well led and is making good arrangements for the proposed change of status to a full primary school in three years' time.

Pupils feel very safe in school and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They understand clearly the importance of eating and drinking the right things, and of the effects of exercise on their bodies. They happily take on responsibility to a high level given their ages. Some Year 4, for example, lead the music liturgy in school and also help lead mass in the local church. Those on the school council take their role seriously and are able to have some impact on life in the school. For example, the four lunchtime clubs arose from their suggestions. Above all, the pupils show an unbounded enjoyment of taking a full part in all school activities and this has a very positive impact on their learning. The school does not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to learn more about other cultures including some of those represented in the school or elsewhere in this country or globally. Even so, their contribution to the local and the school community is excellent and they have a good understanding of the impact of, for example, their charity work.

Pupils make good progress in most subjects. Their progress in reading is often outstanding, but it is less good in mathematics and writing. The school has put in place a number of initiatives to raise standards in these two subjects further. This means that standards in mathematics are improving and that there are better opportunities, especially for the boys, to write for a wider range of purposes. Teachers do not always set sufficiently challenging work to really extend the most able pupils and this limits their progress in some lessons. However, those pupils who are at an early stage of learning English, many of whom join the school at times other than is normal, often make outstanding progress due to the very effective support they get. In addition, pupils reach above average standards in art and design, and many pupils reach exceptionally high standards in music through high quality singing or instrument playing. Almost every pupil in the school learns to play a stringed or woodwind instrument and they receive some excellent teaching both from school staff and from specialist teachers.

The capacity for sustaining improvement is good because the staff know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The governing body supports the school well, and is doing so especially effectively in preparation for the coming changes. However, they do not focus their work sufficiently on systematically evaluating how successful the school is through focused visits or in depth monitoring of provision. Improvement since the last inspection has been good for all of the key issues.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics and writing further by:
 - ensuring there is sufficient challenge for the more able pupils in all lessons
 - developing teachers' skills in assessing pupils' learning in writing.
- Improve the school's provision for community cohesion by teaching pupils more about other cultures nationally and globally, including those represented in the school.
- Improve the governing body's arrangements for fully and systematically evaluating the school's work through more focused visits.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

1

Pupils' progress was good in almost all lessons observed and their enjoyment in their learning is outstanding. They have exemplary attitudes towards school and their behaviour is excellent. This is because they get on together so well, support each other when working together and have very positive relationships with the staff. Attendance is above average.

The school wants to boost standards further especially in mathematics and writing, even though they are above average. The current Year 2 pupils are on track to achieve higher standards than last year, and their reading skills are especially good. Work to improve writing has led to events such as an author visit, more efforts targeted at getting boys to write and older pupils working with younger ones. The work produced is clearly of a higher standard than pupils' day to day writing and shows that they are capable of some high quality work.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. They are identified early and provided for well. The most able pupils achieve well over time but in some lessons they are not given sufficiently challenging tasks and this slows their progress. Minority ethnic groups are supported very effectively and they often make outstanding progress from their starting points.

Pupils achieve above average basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Their effective learning habits and the pride that they take in their work mean that they are outstandingly well prepared for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

Teaching and learning are good and this has been maintained since the last inspection. The school has improved its marking and day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress. Pupils can now understand what the objectives of lessons are, and they say the marking often tells them how they can improve as well as what they have done well. They have a good understanding of their individual targets in writing. Assessment skills are good, although the staff are still working to improve their ability to assess accurately pupils' writing, and to be sure about what needs to be in place so that skills improve and the next level is achieved. A very good assessment technique was observed in one lesson on magnetism, where the pupils recorded what they had learned and any questions about aspects they did not understand on sticky notes. These enabled the teacher to get a picture of their understanding and what the next stage in their learning needs to cover.

Lessons are usually well-planned and the work is largely well-matched to the lower or middle attaining pupils, although sometimes too easy for the most able. The best lessons are very practical and active, and this method of learning is supported by the pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes. Teachers' planning makes appropriate links between subjects and there are very effective enrichment activities for gifted and talented pupils at local secondary schools. The use of new technology is interwoven well through the curriculum, making it a meaningful tool for pupils' learning.

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

There is excellent support, guidance and care for the pupils. There are strong arrangements for promoting outstanding behaviour and above average attendance. The pupils talk in detail about how safe they feel in school and the lack of bullying, racism or any other threat. Staff work extremely well with parents and carers and a range of outside agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has led the school effectively for a number of years, and this is reflected in the school's successes, its popularity and in the extremely positive views of the parents. Good quality leadership is also evident from other staff with responsibilities. Because of this, standards are above average and pupils' overall outcomes are outstanding. The school quickly recognises weaknesses and works hard to address them, as shown in its response to the fall in mathematics standards as well as work to improve writing. Staff collaborate well and make an effective team, sharing good ideas and supporting each other if needed. All are aware of the priorities for improvement and the challenges the school faces. At the time of the inspection all safeguarding requirements were met well.

The governing body has supported the school effectively over the years and is doing a good job in preparation for changes to the status of the school. Expertise is used well in regard to health and safety, human resources and financial issues. However, the governors have not been systematic enough in evaluating the work of the school through focused visits. One outcome of this has been the lack of sufficient analysis of the school's provision for teaching pupils about how other people live in different parts of this country or globally. This means they have not developed sufficient understanding of life in a multi-cultural society, beyond that of their own school and locality. Even so, the school is good at promoting equal opportunities and all pupils reflect well on those less fortunate than themselves. The before school club provides those attending with a good, productive and calm start to the school day.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2

Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have a very positive start to school life because the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is good. The early assessment when children start school shows that, although there are exceptions, most children have a knowledge and understanding broadly in line with that expected. They make good progress during their time in the Reception class and by the time they start Year 1 many of them have reached levels above those expected. This is especially the case for the personal, social and emotional skills, their reading and communication skills, and their physical skills which are often exceptionally good.

Since the last inspection the accommodation has improved and children now have excellent access to a good outdoor classroom. This is used very effectively and the children clearly enjoy taking part in activities outside when they can. For example, in one lesson children loved moving and dancing in response to music, trying to create the movements of different animals. The focus on developing children's speaking skills is also evidently successful and they talk confidently and maturely about their work and play, and about their lives outside school.

The parents report how good the starting school arrangements are and how pleased they are with their children's progress. This is due to good, well-planned teaching and team work. Children's progress is assessed continuously so that staff are aware of children's needs when planning their work.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

The parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. All of the questionnaires returned were very positive. There was mild concern about communication but in the

main parents were full of praise for all aspects of the school's work. They particularly praised the school's caring and family-orientated ethos. The inspection findings support the parents' positive views.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



12 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Sudbury,
CO10 1JP

I really enjoyed visiting your school recently and I want to thank you all for the friendly and warm way you welcomed me to the school and helped me find out all about it. Special thanks to the children I met to talk to, and to those I sat with at lunchtime. This letter is to let you know what I found out about the school. I agree with you and your parents that there are lots of very good things of which the school can be proud. Here are some of them.

- You have a good start to school in the Reception class.
- You make good progress in your learning because you are so well behaved, have such good attitudes towards school and work so hard in lessons.
- Your headteacher and staff organise the school well, teach you well and give you a lot of exciting and practical things to do.
- You are outstanding at music and it is amazing to see so many of you learning an instrument. Well done and keep it up!
- You know how to stay safe and healthy and who to talk to if you are worried about something.

Your teachers and I agree that the school needs to:

- help you get even better at mathematics and writing
- make sure those of you who find learning easier are given difficult work to help you make even more progress
- find ways to help you learn more about how other people live in this country and abroad
- find ways to help the governors find out more about the school's work.

Many thanks again for your help. Enjoy your time at St Joseph's and keep working hard!

Geof Timms
Lead inspector

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