

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105073
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336417
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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 of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Allman
Headteacher	Mrs Roberta Blakemore
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 13 lessons taught by 12 teachers. They held meetings with parents, groups of pupils, governors and members of staff. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school development plan, teachers' lesson plans, assessment and tracking data, safeguarding and policy documents and samples of pupils' workbooks. They analysed 25 parental, 95 pupil and 17 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment and progress of boys in Key Stage 1, girls in Key Stage 2 and that of middle ability pupils
- the effectiveness of measures to improve attendance
- progress and attainment in mathematics
- the accuracy of leaders' and managers' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high and is three times the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little above average. The school has gained Healthy School status, the Activemark and the Basic Skills Award.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Joseph's is a good school in which all groups of pupils achieve well. They start school with skills that are well below those expected of three-year-olds and leave with standards that are average for 11-year-olds and rising. The school is a happy community where pupils from all faiths and backgrounds work together productively and display good levels of care for each other. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, as a result of hard work on the part of staff and pupils, attendance is now average. The persistent absence of a few pupils is rapidly reducing.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Indoor provision is good and children learn and play in a well-resourced and attractive environment. However, opportunities to learn outdoors are limited by insufficient equipment and restricted space. Since the last inspection, the rate of progress has accelerated for nearly all pupils so that most are working either at, or above, expected levels. Middle-ability and higher-attaining pupils are reaching their potential and girls and boys progress at a similar rate. Pupils are progressing well in all subject areas because the school has eliminated a previous weakness in the teaching of mathematics.

Teaching is good and there are very effective systems to track pupils' progress which ensure that any who are at risk of falling behind are identified quickly and given effective additional support. Because of this, all pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The good curriculum is increasingly creative and exciting, which is one reason why attendance is improving.

Leaders and managers have worked very hard over time to develop this school so that all aspects of its provision have improved since the last inspection and outcomes for all children are better. Senior leaders are effective and dedicated, and lead a team of staff committed to working together to provide the best education for the pupils in their care. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, so that future planning is based on a secure understanding of what the school needs to do next. Governors are totally supportive and proud of the school, but are less effective in acting as a critical friend and do not use the committee structure to best effect. Based on what has been achieved recently, the school has a good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve resources and the opportunities for children to learn outdoors in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Work with governors to help them to challenge the school robustly and further develop the committee structure.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The school's good tracking system has ensured that teachers take positive action to ensure that girls and boys and pupils of different abilities all make good progress. Pupils behave well in lessons because of the high expectations of adults and the positive strategies the school has developed to manage the behaviour of a few pupils who display more challenging attitudes. In lessons, pupils respond well to questions which make them think and are keen to contribute to lessons. They particularly enjoy active lessons, problem-solving and opportunities to work independently, both indoors and out. Classroom routines are well established and routines are understood. Pupils are keen to talk about their work and demonstrate how well they are reaching the targets set for them. They cooperate well in pairs or in groups.

Pupils are well informed about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are proud of their healthy school status. They say that they feel totally safe and have confidence and trust in the adults in school. 'Everyone is happy and enjoys school' was one comment during a meeting with the school council. This view is supported by their parents and carers. Pupils develop enterprise skills through the annual enterprise competition, in which each class is given £10 and must use it to generate a profit. Many develop citizenship skills by participating in the democratic process through voting for members of their school council and for the head boy and head girl, visiting the Mayor's parlour and working with other school councils. Recently they campaigned against the closure of the local swimming baths.

Pupils contribute to the life of their school in a number of ways, for example, as head girl and boy, friendship buddies, house captains, school council members or attendance ambassadors. The latter group of pupils regularly broadcast from the school's new radio station and take mini-lessons in different classes explaining the importance of good attendance. Pupils take an active part in regular fund raising and support the local community in a number of ways, such as helping with gardening at a local retirement home. Recently, a local resident wrote to the school commenting on the pupils' 'beautiful manners and high spirits'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are aware of the consequences of their actions and develop a good understanding about cultures other than their own.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan effective lessons with varied activities and a brisk pace so that pupils are enthusiastic, positive and want to learn. Teachers use creative and interesting strategies to engage pupils and give them praise and encouragement. High expectations of good behaviour are largely met and pupils and teachers have good relationships based on mutual respect. The school has succeeded in accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics and ensuring that girls and boys progress equally well, as do pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is a good emphasis on active learning. During the inspection, Years 3 and 4 pupils were totally engrossed in independent research for their current project on ancient Egypt. Most pupils know what to do to improve their work and find teachers' marking helpful. Teaching assistants play an important role in making sure everyone in class makes good progress.

The good curriculum is broad and varied and concentrates on raising attainment and enhancing enjoyment. A high profile is given to enhancing pupils' personal development and well-being. Subjects are linked in exciting and creative ways. For example, all classes are currently preparing for a festival on the 'Seven Wonders of the World' when they will share their learning and demonstrate their skills to each other. There is a good emphasis on sport, music, information and communication technology and specialist French and German teaching. After-school clubs ranging from Dr Who to martial arts to craft and gardening are especially popular and well attended. Visits, such as the annual trip to London, and visitors further extend pupils' horizons.

Good care, guidance and support make a major contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. There is very well-targeted support for more vulnerable pupils.

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Pastoral care is excellent, particularly from the home/school worker. The school has succeeded, after a long time, in raising attendance to average because of its commitment, creative strategies and wholehearted efforts. Good support helps pupils to settle quickly into school and later to move on to their secondary schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Raising attainment has been the key focus for senior leaders over the past few years. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher and other senior teachers, all aspects of the school's work have steadily improved, so that pupils now achieve well and progress is good. The tracking of pupils' progress is a major strength and leads to prompt action to support pupils who need it. The regular monitoring of teaching and learning is effective. Leaders are concentrating on developing the consistency of teaching and marking across the school.

Self-evaluation is accurate and development planning is based on the right priorities to take the school forward. Governors are very supportive and loyal to the school but the role they play in challenging the school is limited. The committee structure is not sufficiently well developed so that responsibilities for monitoring the school's work can be better shared. Staff morale is high because, by working together, the school has improved so much. One teacher commented 'I am extremely proud of my school and the children who attend St Joseph's. I am really happy here and look forward to coming every day'.

The school has a good understanding of the community it serves and makes a strong contribution to local community cohesion. Further afield there are national links with catholic schools across the country and, as a result of the school's links with schools in Africa and India, it is working towards full International Award status from the British Council. Pupils regularly have the opportunity to mix with people from other backgrounds. The school promotes equal opportunities well. Safeguarding measures meet requirements. The school maintains good partnerships with parents and carers and a wide range of agencies, which support the well-being of pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy their learning and make good progress from starting points below those typically expected for their age. Adults encourage children to be active and creative learners. Children make good progress in all aspects of their learning and particularly in language and calculation. Children learn to work and play happily together and generally they behave well. Teaching is good because planning is precise and involves all adults. Adults carefully record the small steps in learning that each child makes and this is used to plan the next stage. Adults incorporate children's ideas and interests into their learning activities and there are plenty of opportunities for children to choose their own activities. Activities outdoors are limited because the area is under-resourced. Staff do their best with what is available.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Staff take very good care of children so that they feel safe and happy. There is good teamwork among all the adults and leaders are well aware that the outdoor learning area needs enhancement. There are strong links with parents and carers who are well informed and involved in their children's education.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are happy with the school and all that it provides. Those who responded to the questionnaire particularly praised the commitment of the staff, the way in which the school helps children to develop confidence and the support for children with additional educational needs. Those spoken to by inspectors during the inspection commented especially on how much the school has improved over the last few years. They welcome the many opportunities to come into school and see their children at work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 238 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	56	9	36	2	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	52	12	48	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	56	10	40	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	56	7	28	3	12	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	12	48	12	48	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	52	9	36	2	8	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	32	16	64	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	36	14	56	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	52	9	36	1	4	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	48	8	32	2	8	2	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	36	14	56	1	4	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	15	60	8	32	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	56	8	32	3	12	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey, CH44 7ED

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited your school last week. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work.

We think that St Joseph's is a good school and we know that you agree. You work and play well together and your behaviour is usually good. You listen to your teachers and work hard in lessons so that you make good progress.

We think that the teachers plan interesting work for you and can see that you really enjoy active learning when you are doing lots of different activities and making choices for yourselves. We are pleased to see so many of you playing an active role in school, as attendance ambassadors, members of the school council and by taking on other roles to help your own community. The school takes good care of you and you told us that you feel safe and happy.

To help school improve still more we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to improve the outdoor learning area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and to help the governors play a more active role in supporting the school as it gets better. You can help by always attending regularly and continuing to listen hard to your teachers.

We send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Judith Straw

Lead inspector

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