

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118762
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358438
Inspection dates	19-20 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Cridland
Headteacher	Bridie Fogarty
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2008
School address	Ackholt Road Aylesham Kent CT3 3SA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and observed five teachers. The inspectors met parents, informally, on the first morning of the inspection and held meetings with the headteacher, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils. The school's work was observed: this included scrutinising samples of pupils' work, the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress, management and curriculum documentation, teachers' planning and safeguarding documentation. In addition, inspectors took account of questionnaire responses from nine parents and carers, eight staff and 37 pupils.

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

- What impact have the strategies used by the school had on raising attainment, especially in English in Key Stage 2?
- Do teachers set consistent challenge for all groups of pupils, especially boys in Key Stage 1, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the more able?
- How well are the curriculum and extra-curricular activities contributing to pupils' achievement?
- How accurate is the monitoring and self-evaluation of leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, and is it leading to sufficient improvement in pupils' achievement?

Information about the school

St Joseph's is much smaller than the average size school and serves its village community and immediate area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with none who speak English as an additional language. A higher than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than that found nationally. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. Two of the four class teachers are new this term. A new Early Years Foundation Stage classroom and outdoor learning area have recently been added to the school. The school holds a number of awards including Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools status. The Kaleidoscope Nursery and After School Club shares the school site, but is not managed by the governing body.

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 happy, fully inclusive school in which pupils behave well and work enthusiastically because they are well taught and lessons are interesting. A group of pupils said they enjoyed school, adding, 'We especially like the teachers because they help you in all sorts of learning.' As a result of careful monitoring of the progress made by each pupil and a well planned curriculum, pupils make good progress in their time in the school. The school has a strong Catholic family ethos which parents and carers value; it provides a good quality of education.

Each year group in the mixed-age classes is small. As many as half the pupils in each year group have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The changing characteristics of each year group leads to fluctuating results at the end of Year 6, and the attainment of those presently in Year 6 is broadly average. The school's own careful monitoring of pupils' progress indicates that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more-able, make good progress. The Basic Skills Quality Mark recognises the good quality of the assessment systems. The provision for the youngest children is satisfactory overall. The use of the new outdoor learning area is still developing and staff are beginning to improve their skills in encouraging children to explain their ideas and improve their creative and numeracy skills. Teaching is good for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 and is monitored well. The tasks planned for pupils in lessons provide good challenge and clear targets are set to help them identify what they need to learn next.

Pupils behave well in their lessons and around the school. They show respect for adults and concern for each other. The school meets safeguarding requirements well and the good care, guidance and support provided by the school is extended by prudent use of a range of external services. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and how to use the internet safely. They make a good contribution to their local village community and show dignity and pride in the many duties they undertake in school. The curriculum is adapted well for the needs of pupils and provides a broad and exciting range of experiences. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the exciting dimensions to their lessons, such as the pirate theme in Years 1 and 2, which make learning fun for boys and girls and contribute to the good progress they make. Extra-curricular visits and visitors extend learning well beyond the classroom. The focus on developing pupils' extended writing skills in interesting ways in Key Stage 2 is leading to improved progress in English. Links between subjects are developing well to provide pupils with more opportunities in a variety of settings to use their skills in English, as well as mathematics and science.

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The headteacher provides good leadership which unites staff in their ambition to help pupils of all abilities make the best progress they can. The challenges posed by small year groups and much higher than average levels of special educational needs are well managed by senior leaders and managers. Monitoring of progress and the effectiveness of new initiatives is thorough and effective. Governance is satisfactory: the governing body is very supportive of the school and governors are now taking effective steps to improve their level of challenge and their involvement in strategic planning. The accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness and a clear, shared view of what needs to be done next give the school good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making more imaginative use of the outdoor learning area
 - developing the quality of interactions between adults and children to inspire imaginative play and extend children's skills with numbers.

- Improve the skills of the governing body to ensure that:
 - the school is held to account more effectively
 - the impact of new initiatives to improve outcomes for pupils is rigorously monitored.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Standards fluctuate year-on-year because of the varying characteristics of small cohorts of pupils. In Year 6, in the summer term of 2010, there were eight pupils, of whom four had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Lesson observations and the school's own efficient tracking indicate progress is good for all pupils from their initial starting points. For example, as a result of the careful focus on improving reading and pupils' skills in writing in a variety of contexts there has been a noticeable improvement in pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1. The setting of pupils by ability across year groups is also showing early signs of raising attainment in mathematics. Close monitoring of pupils' progress leads to rapid identification of pupils who are not achieving as well as they could. A range of effective support measures is used to provide additional guidance for these pupils. Pupils settle quickly, show positive attitudes to learning and enjoy sharing ideas with their classmates and 'talking partners'. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good support they receive in lessons and in well tailored learning programmes.

Pupils are inspired by and engage well with the selection of themes and topics, such as Roman Britain and pirates. Themes have been successful, especially in inspiring

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boys in literacy. As a result, writing has improved for boys and girls. In a Year 5 and 6 literacy lesson, an appropriately dressed press reporter inspired pupils to develop their use of adverbs in drafting interesting sentences and also an advert to help change Count Olaf's eating habits. Pupils try to do their best in lessons because learning is exciting.

Pupils behave well and show a strong sense of responsibility both for each other and for the community. School councillors have been involved in the appointment of two members of the teaching staff. Play leaders make playtimes more enjoyable for others. Pupils show good support for local ventures and charities such as that for an organisation arranging respite care for disabled children. Attendance is average and improving gradually as a result of the school's diligence in following up all absences. Pupils feel safe at school. The Healthy School status is evidence of pupils' good awareness of healthy eating and also of what makes for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflected in their good relationships and awareness of other cultures in Britain and around the world. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted well through the Catholic ethos of the school. There are quiet prayer areas in classrooms and around the school where pupils can reflect or post a special prayer. The average academic standards that pupils attain, together with their good personal development, ensure they are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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?

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

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The inspection confirmed the school's view that the quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and establish clearly at the start of lessons what pupils are to learn and the objectives of the lesson. Good questioning encourages pupils to explain their ideas and develop their speaking skills. Classroom assistants are well deployed and work in effective partnerships with teachers to support groups and individual pupils. Information about the progress pupils make is used well to plan tasks that are well matched to the different abilities of groups of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own learning, identifying where they need further help and what they have understood. Marking is regular and also identifies clearly the next steps in pupils' learning so they have a clear path forward. Some marking also establishes a dialogue with pupils who can then respond to questions and comments made by teachers. Teaching and learning are kept under close review by senior staff and there is an open approach to sharing good practice in lessons. The progress made by all groups of pupils is good and is leading to visible signs of improved attainment in Key Stage 1 although attainment remains average in Key Stage 2.

The curriculum has been successfully adapted to provide interesting learning experiences and support for pupils who find learning difficult. Themes are woven through lessons and teachers are now working to improve links between subjects to provide further opportunities for pupils to extend their skills, especially in English and mathematics, but also in science and information and communication technology (ICT). In a Year 4 ICT lesson, for example, pupils were very involved in developing their skills in creating a presentation through clipping in pictures to illustrate the text on different aspects of life in Roman Britain. Enrichment of learning experiences outside lessons is good and a broad range of extra-curricular clubs and visits stimulate and extend learning for pupils. A wide range of clubs are organised at lunch time and after school, including camera club and a variety of sports.

Good quality care, guidance and support ensure smooth pathways from Nursery in to Reception and then later from Year 6 to secondary schools. Within school, all staff assign a high priority to the care and welfare of pupils. Sensitive and well-planned arrangements are made for pupils with disabilities as well as those with social and emotional needs. Assessments of pupils' needs are rapid and support networks planned by the school are flexible and respond quickly to changing situations. The family liaison officer works in close partnership with the school to support pupils and their families in a variety of circumstances.

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides clear and ambitious leadership. The senior leadership team work in close and efficient partnership to ensure that all aspects of the work of the school are carefully monitored, pupils' progress is kept under close review and teaching and learning are effective. All staff recognise the challenges arising from small class sizes and the changing needs of pupils. United ambition is fuelling improved progress for all pupils. The effective use of a range of well chosen strategies, supported by staff training, has led to clear improvements in the progress made by all pupils since the last inspection. The partnership with parents and carers is good and strengthened by the school's encouragement through workshops for them to become involved with their children's learning. The school provides good information for parents and carers through termly reports and consultation evenings.

Governors are rapidly developing their skills and expertise in order to improve the level of challenge they offer and to monitor more closely the developments throughout the school. Safeguarding requirements are met well and the school is a harmonious and inclusive community in which each pupil is valued. Community cohesion is well planned to ensure pupils have an awareness not only of their local community but also of other parts of Britain and of cultures in other parts of the world. Issues identified in the last inspection have been tackled and achievement for all pupils has improved. Lessons in English provide interest and challenge. Pupils are set by ability in mathematics and teachers keep a close watch on the progress made by all pupils. These initiatives have contributed to the good progress pupils make. Attainment overall remains average; it has improved at the end of Year 2 but new initiatives have still to have an impact on attainment at the end of Year 6.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly in school because they receive good care. Children enter Reception with a range of skills and abilities but they are particularly low in elements of language and numeracy. Children make good progress in their social, emotional and physical development and speaking skills. Enjoyment of language and books is fostered through the enjoyable story times that delight children. Early signs indicate that the children’s writing and reading skills are beginning to improve as a result of a focus on understanding words by learning to blend the letter sounds. However, areas of numeracy and creative development remain weak. Good resources are used appropriately by staff to plan activities that cover the six areas of learning. The use made of the new outside learning area is not yet fully developed to provide a broad range of learning and play activities. Although activities encourage children’s physical development, opportunities are missed to consistently extend their number skills outside the classroom and their imaginative and creative development also. This is because adults do not subtly intervene in children’s independent games in ways that encourage them to count and use numbers or persuade them to explain their ideas to help develop more creative activities.

Children mix well and learn to share. Independence is fostered carefully. As a result, children follow routines well and learn to tidy things away sensibly. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are included well, enjoy talking and playing with other children. Teaching is satisfactory. The headteacher leads the Early Years Foundation Stage and is providing good support for the newly qualified class teacher to help to develop her skills and confidence. There is a good team spirit in Reception and the classroom assistant works in close partnership with the teacher. Children’s development is carefully monitored by all staff and parents and carers are kept closely informed about the progress their children are making through informal daily exchanges and termly meetings with staff.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Those who did reply, or spoke to inspectors, are happy with their children’s experience at school. Parents and carers are pleased that their children enjoy school, are safe and

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make enough progress. Some parents did not think they had enough help to support their children's learning. Inspection evidence endorses parents' and carers' positive views of the school. The inspection found that parents were provided with good guidance to help them to support their children's learning but only a few parents attend some of the events planned for them. The school had conducted a similar survey of parents' views which had a positive response from a much larger sample. One parent said simply her children, 'Really enjoy it and are keen to get here in the morning.'

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Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St. Joseph's Primary School 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 nine completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 81 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	44	4	44	0	0	1	11
The school keeps my child safe	4	44	4	44	1	11	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	44	2	22	0	0	3	33
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	22	6	67	0	0	1	11
The teaching is good at this school	4	44	2	22	3	33	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	33	1	11	2	22	3	33
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	44	2	22	3	33	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)	5	56	1	11	0	0	3	33
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	33	5	56	0	0	1	11
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	33	1	11	0	0	3	33
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	33	3	33	0	0	3	33
The school is led and managed effectively	4	44	2	22	0	0	3	33
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	44	4	44	0	0	1	11

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%.

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Glossary

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.
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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring term 2009/10 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.

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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 pupils' 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.

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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.



22 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Aylesham, Kent, CT3
3AS**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so helpful and polite to us. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at the exciting work you do. We especially liked the pirate ship and Roman warrior you had made in two of your classes.

We were impressed to see how much you enjoy your lessons and you told us you find learning fun because teachers make your lessons interesting. You get on together and behave well. You know a lot about being safe and healthy. We think that you make good progress in your time at St. Joseph's and you are well cared for. You make a good contribution to your community and are learning a lot about the world in which you live. Your headteacher, other staff and the governing body work well together to make your school a happy place in which to learn.

You told us yours was a good school and we agree with you. We have suggested two things which we think would help to make your school even better.

- To make learning even more exciting for children in Reception we have asked that better use is made of the new outdoor learning area. We have also asked adults to talk more to children when they are playing to help them learn more about counting and to be more imaginative and creative.
- We have asked the governing body to improve their skills so that they take an even more active part in watching how well the school is doing and help to plan its future so that you all make better and better progress.

You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best at school. It was a great pleasure to visit St. Joseph's and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball (on behalf of the inspection team)
Lead inspector

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