

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Upton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105068
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336413
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided School
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nick Dutton
Headteacher	Miss Julie Kenny
Date of previous school inspection	June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including policies on safeguarding, the school development plan, teachers' planning, assessment files and records of pupils' progress, including individual education plans for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They considered the views in questionnaires returned by staff, pupils and 109 parents and carers.

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

- the progress and achievement of pupils in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics
- progress of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the school's provision in information and communication technology
- all aspects of safeguarding and provision to secure the welfare of pupils.

Information about the school

The school serves a socially mixed area close to Birkenhead. Its pupils come from a wider area than the immediate locality. A very large majority of pupils are White British. A few are Asian or British Asian, or White or Black African. Few are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. About 10% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. None has a statement of special educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes. A privately run pre-school playgroup and a before- and after-school club operate in the school and are subject to a separate inspection. The school has the Investors in People award, Healthy Schools Standard and Basic Skills Accreditation.

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

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well to reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The range of children's attainment when they start in the Reception classes is wide and overall, is broadly average. Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception Year and thereafter pupils make good and, at times, outstanding progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Progress and achievement are particularly strong in Years 4 and 6. These outcomes constitute significant progress since the last inspection, when progress in Key Stage 2 was found to be satisfactory rather than good and too few pupils were reaching the higher level in national tests in Year 6. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave and concentrate well in lessons. All pupils take with them to secondary school good skills of teamwork, independence and commitment to learning.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are good. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and have high expectations for what they can achieve. They adapt their teaching effectively to accommodate the range of attainment in their classes, some of which have a mixture of two age groups. The curriculum has particular strengths in how it links subjects together. For example, religious education, history, science and information and communication technology often contribute very well to what pupils are learning in English lessons. The care, guidance and support provided by staff are good so that pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they have concerns. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in the curriculum for these children which is now play and activity based.

Leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, assisted by an expanded senior leadership team, has been successful in tackling shortcomings found at the last inspection. Together the team is driving forward good improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning, though satisfactory, is not as sharp as it could be and has insufficient focus on how to improve. This is important if achievement is to improve in the Early Years Foundation Stage and progress in all year groups is to match the best in school. A very large majority of parents are positive about the school. They praise the school's ethos and many are pleased with the progress their children make and the way staff are approachable and respond to any concerns they might have. However, a very small but significant minority expressed some concerns in the inspection questionnaire for parents and carers. For example, they consider

that the school does not provide enough information about the school and how well their children are doing.

Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of how the school is performing thanks to an accurate process of self-evaluation. School development planning is detailed and focuses on key outcomes. Day-to-day management is smooth. The school's overall effectiveness has improved since the last inspection and the school has good capacity to maintain high standards and improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- When senior staff monitor the quality of teaching they should focus attention on how pupils' learning can be improved so that their achievement in all year groups matches the best in the school.
- Build on existing strengths to improve links with and support for parents and carers for the benefit of their children's achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

A key feature of how well pupils achieve and how much they enjoy their learning is their positive response in lessons. They are quick to offer ideas and answer questions and they readily settle down to independent or group work. They have developed good working routines and share ideas sensibly with a partner. For example, they are able to explain the processes they follow in solving a problem in mathematics. They present their written work with care and attention to handwriting, spelling and punctuation. As a result, a good proportion of pupils in Year 6 reach above the expected level in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This has been an improving trend in recent years and has contributed to the overall high standards. The school has taken effective steps to correct any dips in standards, for example, in mathematics last year, so that standards in the current Year 6 are buoyant. Already over 40% of pupils are working at the higher Level 5 in all three subjects. Pupils' progress in different year groups is never less than good and in some years is outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their classmates.

Pupils' understanding of personal safety and how to lead a healthy lifestyle is good. They report that they feel safe in school and bullying is not a concern for them. If they do have any concerns they know what to do and who to turn to. Attendance has been either in line with or just above the national average in recent years and the rate for the current term is in line with the average. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong and put a lot of effort into raising money for charities. They take on responsible positions in school well. The school council is active and provides good opportunities for the pupils' views to be considered. A recent innovation has been the setting up of an eco-school council which has already planned a 'Switch-Off Fortnight'.

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
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 skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and maintain a brisk pace to learning in lessons. They question pupils well, giving them time to think before answering and asking for clear explanations. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to lessons, supporting individuals and groups with special educational needs and/or disabilities particularly effectively. Lesson planning is generally clear and caters for the needs of pupils, though in a small number of lessons, teachers do not always check on how well pupils who work without adult support, are getting on. Recent developments in assessing how well pupils are doing and checking their progress are good. There are examples of exceptional practice in teachers' marking of pupils' work, for instance in Year 6, but this is not consistent across all age groups. Teachers' use of information and communication technology has significantly improved since the last inspection. In one outstanding lesson in Year 6, for instance, both the interactive whiteboard and pupils' laptops were used exceptionally well for pupils to design and write a newspaper report.

The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of visits and good links with other schools and institutions, for example, the local secondary schools and the 'Learning Lighthouse'. Subjects such as science and information and communication technology are promoted particularly well in this way, thus helping the learning of all pupils including those with talents in these areas. The curriculum is carefully planned on a two-year cycle to cater for the mixed-age classes. It promotes pupils' personal development well, for example, through lessons in personal, social and health education and religious education. There is a residential trip and a good variety of cultural and sporting activities after lessons.

There are effective systems to cope with the special requirements of more vulnerable pupils. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities have clear targets which help them to make good progress. Links with associated Nursery classes, including the privately run one which the school hosts, and with secondary schools are good. They ensure a smooth transition into school and on to the next stage of education.

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?

The senior leaders make good use of all relevant data about the performance of the school to help them to plan the next steps in the school's development. Staff report they feel part of this drive to improve provision and are motivated to contribute. Senior staff closely monitor the learning of specific groups of pupils in order to confirm they are taking full advantage of the opportunities the school offers them. They acted quickly and effectively, for instance, when it was noted that boys were not doing as well as they should in English. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not sharp enough. Governors have a good awareness of the strengths of the school and areas for improvement but rely on senior staff for information rather than their own systems for gathering the views of parents and pupils. The school's engagement with parents to find out how they perceive the school is satisfactory, although a very small minority consider the school does not do enough to keep them informed. However, staff take satisfactory steps to inform them about their children's progress and the general life of the school. The school adopts good practice across all aspects of safeguarding, including the safe recruitment of staff. Staff are well-trained as a result of the very full programme of training in issues of child protection. The school has well-established links with the church and local schools and has an action plan for improving wider links, including those with schools further afield and abroad. Overall, the school's promotion of community cohesion is developing satisfactorily.

These are the grades for the 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	3
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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy their year in the Reception classes. They grow in confidence and independence. Their speaking and listening skills develop well and their knowledge

and understanding of the world are good. By the end of the year, the achievement of the majority has been satisfactory and their attainment is in line with local and national expectations. However, there are few who have reached above the expected levels in key areas of learning such as communication, language and literacy.

Provision is satisfactory overall. There have been good improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection, so that there is now a clear focus on activity and play-based learning. The quality of learning indoors is better than outside, partly because of the limited outdoor space. However, staff use the outdoor area continuously and plans are in hand to make improvements and provide shelter from poor weather. All adults support children's learning well and interact with them to promote their language and understanding. At times, however, there are missed opportunities for children to explain to adults and other children what they think about an investigation and this was observed when they were comparing the weight of objects. In addition, there are times when staff do not check closely enough on the progress of children working independently from an adult. Safeguarding arrangements are good as are all aspects to promote the children's welfare. Teachers' planning is generally good and assessments are made regularly of how the children are progressing.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good features include teamwork and the positive drive towards improvement which is clearly evident in the well-focused action plan for the key stage. This not only refers to developing the outdoor environment for learning, but also the need to improve the achievement of all the children so that more are working above the expected level by the time they move into Year 1. Arrangements for the transition into Year 1 are satisfactory and links with parents are good.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Just over one third of parents responded to the inspectors' questionnaire. A very large majority of these responded positively. Those who wrote an additional comment praised the ethos of the school and how well their children were progressing. Further comments praised the way the staff are approachable and respond to their concerns. A few parents reported they do not know enough about how their child is doing and that they are not given the support they need to help their children. However, inspectors noted that the staff have an open-door policy on meeting parents, there are three parents' evenings each year and a termly communication about the curriculum for each year group. A few parents do not feel action is taken to deal with unacceptable behaviour. There is, however, little evidence to support this and none to indicate that behaviour is anything less than good in lessons. Senior staff are aware that playtimes are restricted by the shortage

of space in school playgrounds and this can lead to minor incidents of conflict between pupils. They are actively seeking ways to make playtimes more enjoyable and less crowded.

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 Upton 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 109 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 310 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	55	44	40	2	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	58	53	45	45	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	36	61	55	9	8	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	34	65	59	3	2	4	4
The teaching is good at this school	46	42	53	48	6	6	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	34	53	51	12	12	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	40	59	55	3	3	1	1
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)	30	27	58	54	11	11	3	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	34	61	55	5	5	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	24	63	56	10	10	6	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	25	65	59	10	10	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	34	31	54	51	13	13	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	40	54	51	5	5	4	4

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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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>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.



07 December 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Upton, CH49 6LL

It was a pleasure to inspect your school. You were all very friendly and helpful and we enjoyed finding out from you how you are getting on. On behalf of the inspection team I would like to share with you what we found.

Your school is providing you with a good education. You make good progress in lessons and, by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach high standards in English, mathematics and science. This is because the teaching you receive is good and you work hard. You behave well and look after each other. You told us that you enjoy using the computers and laptops in lessons and visiting places like the 'Learning Lighthouse'. You particularly like the extra-curricular events, such as the fencing, golf and gymnastics, and the residential visit. Your headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants take good care of you all and make sure that you all feel safe and secure.

Part of my job is to identify how the school can be even better, I am suggesting two areas for the school to improve.

- The senior leaders, such as the headteacher and deputy headteacher, should do more to check on how well you are learning. Then they need to advise your teachers how to help you learn even more.
- Some of your parents say that they would like to know more about what the school is doing and how they can best help you so I am asking the staff to give more attention to the links they have with your parents.

Please continue to work hard. I send you all my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Carruthers
Lead Inspector

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