

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Christchurch

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113848
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	338255
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Burghart

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	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brigid Hincks
Headteacher	Louise Buxton
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2010
School address	Dorset Road Christchurch BH23 3DA
Telephone number	01202 485976
Fax number	01202 483092
Email address	office@stjosephs.dorset.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons, accounting for 11 teachers, and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including records of pupils' progress, school improvement planning, and reports from the local authority. Inspectors analysed 72 questionnaires from parents and carers, 19 staff and 91 pupils.

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

- why attainment was judged as average by the school when it was better than this in the last report
- the reasons for the more able pupils' profile outcomes being below average in mathematics in 2009, and why pupils seem to do better in Years 1 and 2 than in Years 3 to 6
- the achievement of boys, especially in English in Years 3 to 6
- the contribution of staff, especially middle managers, and governors to the overall profile of leadership and management and the impact of this on pupils' learning.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school. It draws pupils from a wide area, partly because of its Catholic voluntary-aided status. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average in the majority of year groups, but this varies widely. For example, in 2009 nearly 30% of Year 6 pupils had some form of moderate learning difficulties. The school is oversubscribed. To keep to the statutory limit of 30 in a class for pupils in Year 2 and below, pupils are arranged in four class groups, two of which are mixed age. In Years 3 to 6 there are single-age classes with an average of 35 in each. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009 following the retirement of the previous post holder who had been at the school for many years. Since then there have been a variety of changes to staffing and a new management structure has been introduced. Before- and after-school activities are managed privately in the school hall.

The school holds the Healthy School award and takes a strategic role in the initial training of teachers.

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 where pupils happily make good progress in personal as well as academic development because they are well provided for. It is very popular and consistently oversubscribed. One parent summed up their typical views by commenting, 'All of our children have had a happy and secure educational experience. We are proud of our caring family ethos.' Robust leadership and management from the headteacher, senior staff and governors ensure that the school has clear educational direction and that the impact of changes is monitored. The recent initiatives to bring pupils' achievement in mathematics in line with those in English, raise the performance of boys, and ensure that more able pupils consistently reach above average levels have been successful and are testaments to the school's good capacity for sustaining improvement. Improvements are well planned for and there is a shared commitment to continual school development. Although middle managers are as enthusiastic as senior leaders, their roles are not clearly enough defined and this limits their contribution to overall leadership.

The school's caring Catholic atmosphere is complemented by good teaching and the much improved, and now good, use of assessment. This is underpinned by strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils respond well with good, and frequently outstanding, behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. This is successfully fostered in the Early Years Foundation Stage where, apart from weakness in the outdoor learning environment, provision is good, which is then built upon as pupils grow older. Throughout the school, pupils are well prepared for future study and life in general. Their personal development in terms of spiritual, moral and social outcomes is outstanding. However, pupils' cultural development is satisfactory because there are too few opportunities to become aware of, and appreciate, life in a multicultural society. This has a restricting impact on the school's contribution to community cohesion in national and international terms.

Attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 declined following the last inspection with some more able pupils appearing not to fulfil their potential. It was below average in 2009, but this reflected the high proportion of special educational needs and/or disabilities in the year group rather than any significant underachievement. This year attainment is above average with the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels well above average. Effective use of assessment to set targets and help pupils understand how to do better is proving fundamental in promoting pupils' learning. This is especially the case in Years 2, 3 and 6, but is not so successful in the Reception classes where systems for recording children's progress and attainment are not as well established.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the contribution to overall leadership and management of middle managers by:
 - clearly defining their roles and responsibilities
 - providing training to develop their skills of analysing assessment data to inform forward planning and evaluate the impact of changes made
- Introduce an effective system to assess and track the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Improve pupils' awareness and understanding of life in a multicultural society, developing the school's contribution to community cohesion by improving links with communities in contrasting parts of the United Kingdom and abroad
- Improve outdoor provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing protection from the weather
 - providing sufficient, good-quality resources, especially for ride-on and climbing activities

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are making good academic progress, achieving well and having fun in the process. School and local authority records show that this represents sustained improvement especially, but not exclusively, since the new headteacher was appointed. Strengths in personal development identified in the last report have been sustained and built upon. The second Healthy School award confirms what discussion with pupils makes extremely clear, that pupils know how to keep safe and stay fit

Better planning for pupils of different abilities now ensures that more able pupils are well challenged. This has substantially enhanced independent learning and problem solving and enhanced the performance of boys to the point that there are no significant gender differences in achievement. For example, in an excellent Year 6 mathematics lesson designed to build upon what pupils knew about percentages, pupils made outstanding progress in developing strategies. Even less able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also successfully completed the difficult investigation about television scheduling. The whole class relished the open nature of the task, demonstrated strong potential to work together, and managed their own activities efficiently.

Lesson observations clearly show that throughout the school pupils enjoy learning for the vast majority of the time. This was transparently obvious in a variety of activities, such as in Reception/Year 1 literacy where children enthusiastically searched for patterns in stories, and in a Year 3 numeracy session where pupils showed above average attainment and made good progress responding eagerly to three digit calculations. In all classes the few pupils from ethnic minority groups are fully involved, planning takes account of their needs and acknowledges their strengths, which are most

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notable in mathematics.

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	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school's commitment to caring and supporting pupils whatever their needs, backgrounds or ability is effective. This is translated through comprehensive planning and good use of assessment into a broad and relevant curriculum and effective provision. A substantial improvement this school year, as noted by parents, pupils, staff and governors, has been in the use of target setting to raise expectations of individuals and the school. The process, that is known in the school as 'assessment for learning', very effectively encourages pupils to work together. For example, successful use of talking partners helps pupils to evaluate their own performance and identify how they can do better.

Strengths in teaching in the way staff question pupils are capitalised upon to extend learning particularly for more able pupils. Staff very successfully make use of pupils' generally above average speaking and listening skills to encourage pupils to explain their reasons and strategies, and express opinions. The common view, as noted by one

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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member of the school council, that this is 'one big happy family where we all get along' shows that pupils do not find mutual scrutiny threatening. Improving the pace of learning in some lessons, for example avoiding introductions that are too long, and ensuring that pupils are always challenged by the activity are areas for improvement already known to senior leaders. The way these are being successfully addressed is the central reason why pupils in Years 3 to 6 now do equally well as in Years 1 and 2, and in some cases, for example boys' literacy, even better.

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 headteacher's drive and ambition are infectious. She has the overwhelming confidence of stakeholders and leads staff and governors as a strong and ever-improving team. Self-evaluation is good and is at the heart of the school's effective forward planning. There is a shared culture of 'yes we can'. One member of staff summed it up as, 'We feel re-energised and valued.' Improvements to teaching, planning, assessment, documentation and record keeping, together with good procedures for monitoring effectiveness, confirm that the school is well set for the future. However, the monitoring and action planning roles of subject and phase leaders are underdeveloped. Improving the way these middle managers take the initiative for identifying and addressing priorities for improvement already form part of the school improvement plan. Governors are well informed through regular visits and their links with particular year groups. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The school presents a safe learning environment with pupils taken good care of. There have been no incidences of discrimination and procedures to see pupils have equality of opportunity are effective in ensuring pupils have a fair deal.

The school's links with parents, carers and outside agencies, particularly the church, make a positive contribution to the local community. As a centre for teacher training and for child protection training, the school actively supports learning partnerships. However, while basically satisfactory, there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn about lifestyles, faiths and customs in differing parts of the United Kingdom and in other countries. This has a negative impact on the part the school plays in developing community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are inducted smoothly into school routines and very quickly become part of the family of St Joseph's. Parents and carers are pleased with the way their children are cared for and that they come home 'happy and tired!' Despite weaknesses in how assessments of children's attainment and development are recorded, staff do know children well and maintain good communication with parents and carers. Good leadership and management make sure children in the two classes get the same level of attention and opportunities in order to make similar progress and prepare them for Year 1.

Children behave well and get on well together. Sharing and being considerate are strong features. Children of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in terms of communication and language skills. They are emerging as readers and writers and their mathematical development is secure. Provision is good with positive features, for example in relationships, role play and how staff interact with children to get them to explain how they feel. Children were enthralled by their observations and investigations to establish the characteristics of living and non-living things and very careful with equipment. There is a sound balance of directed learning and learning through play, although weaknesses in the outdoor provision reduce opportunities for the free flow of activities in and out, and this is compounded by the lack of shade and gaps in resources.

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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

The school remains popular. The very large majority of parents and carers are very pleased with what is on offer, particularly the quality and impact of the new leadership structure, the family ethos, and the level of care, guidance and support. There was no consensus of negative views, but there were a few comments that class sizes are too large, that some children do not like being taught by a variety of staff, and that some bad behaviour is not dealt with appropriately. Inspectors note that classes in Reception, Years 1 and 2 meet government numerical limit requirements and that, although classes in Years 3 to 6 are above average in size, pupils are making good progress. Inspectors judge behaviour as being at least good and that the way problems are dealt with is effective.

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 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 246 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	69	22	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	72	20	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	35	44	61	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	47	30	42	4	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	42	58	30	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	51	31	43	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	69	21	29	1	2	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)	31	43	31	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	56	25	35	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	36	40	56	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	39	39	54	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	54	29	40	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	69	21	29	0	0	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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:	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. ■ 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.



7 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Christchurch BH23 3DA

Many thanks for your help and kindness during the inspection. We were particularly pleased with the way school councillors and the other Year 6 pupils represented you and were keen to tell us how much you enjoy school. Yours is a good school which is improving all the time because it is well run.

Here are some of the highlights.

- Because you know your targets and keep working at them, you make good progress especially in English and mathematics. Most of you reach standards that are at least as good as in most schools.
- The school takes good care of you and shows you how to stay safe and healthy.
- Teachers plan work that is interesting and teach you well.
- You are being helped to grow up as caring, considerate young people.
- You behave well in and out of class and get on very well with each other at work and play.
- Those of you who have extra learning needs are supported well.

Your headteacher, senior staff and governors are good at finding out what will make the school even better. Here are four things for them to concentrate on.

- Improve the way teachers who are in charge of subjects find out about how well you are doing and then plan what to do next.
- Find a better way to keep track of how well children in Reception are doing.
- Make improvements to the outdoor learning space for those in Reception.
- Give you more opportunities to find out about how people of different backgrounds and faiths live in other parts of our country as well as abroad

You can help by keeping up the good work!

Best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart

Lead inspector

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