

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100441
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	323281
Inspection date	31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Gordon Ewing

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	427
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joanne Stevens
Headteacher	Mr Don Leavy
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Highgate Hill Highgate N19 5NE
Telephone number	020 7272 1270
Fax number	020 7272 9278

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	31 March 2009
Inspection number	323281

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the standards achieved across the school and the progress that pupils make
- the way the school has responded to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection in 2005
- the support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable
- the impact of leadership on the personal development and well-being of pupils.

The inspectors met with staff, governors, pupils and parents. Parts of lessons were observed, 136 parents' questionnaires were analysed, samples of pupils' work were examined and information provided by the school, including self-evaluation, was scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Joseph's hosts one Nursery and two Reception classes as part of its Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The school serves a diverse community with a broad range of social backgrounds. The largest group of pupils are of White British heritage and several other minority ethnic groups are represented in smaller numbers. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is higher than in most schools. The largest groups are of pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties and those who have moderate learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

At the heart of this outstanding school is a real commitment to ensure that every individual really matters. As one parent wrote, 'I think St Joseph's delivers excellent education to a wide variety of pupils'. The overwhelming majority of parents and pupils agree. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is an impressive drive to ensure that children get off to a flying start, even though many join the Nursery with very low skills. This drive focuses on rapidly developing their personal, social and emotional development alongside boosting their language skills. Consequently, children move to Year 1 with excellent attitudes and an infectious enthusiasm for learning.

High-quality teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6, ensures that pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress from their starting points. Within this very positive picture, lessons are not yet consistently outstanding across the school. Standards in Year 2 are high in reading, well above average in mathematics and above average in writing. By the end of Year 6 the vast majority of pupils surpass national expectations, achieving consistently high standards in English, mathematics and science. The keen support of teaching assistants, which boosts the impact of the teaching, plays a key role in ensuring that pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties, those who have moderate learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language, make outstanding progress alongside their peers.

The essence of the pupils' success is the outstanding leadership at all levels, underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos and values. The vibrant and stimulating curriculum is finely tuned to provide challenge and motivation. Underachievement is challenged regularly. For example, the school's meticulous system for tracking progress identified some underperformance in pupils' writing and very effective intervention activities were swiftly introduced to bring about marked improvements. Inspectors were impressed with the moving and inspiring writing linked to the pupils' studies of the life of Anne Frank. One of the school's many strengths is the way in which it instils a love for learning. Particularly impressive is that pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning, not just the work they are doing. They, rightly, see themselves as partners in their education, for example in the way that they set and monitor their own targets and those of their peers. The pupils take on the wide range of responsibilities open to them, including the school council and the eco warriors, with great enthusiasm. From improving the local park for the community to supporting children in Malawi, pupils are developing a coherent understanding of their place in the global community. The diversity of cultures and faiths represented across the school is warmly celebrated and promoted. Consequently, the spiritual, moral, social and emotional aspects of pupils' development are outstanding.

Pupils' enjoyment of school life is clearly reflected in their attendance, which is very high. Their behaviour is exemplary. They show evident pride in their work and school. As one pupil commented, 'We love this school. It's so friendly'. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. For example, some pupils were able to give very precise and knowledgeable advice about the ingredients of a healthy and nutritious meal.

Pupils greatly appreciate all the exciting opportunities on offer, including the performing arts and sport, which allow them to apply key social skills and achieve high academic standards. As a result, the pupils make first-class preparations for their future adult lives. Pupils' personal

development and well-being are outstanding and levels of care, guidance and support are excellent.

School self-evaluation is robust and carefully assesses the impact of interventions and developments. Checks on the individual's progress ensures that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve as well as they can. Alongside the excellent senior leadership team, governors play a formative role in shaping the school's future and successfully monitor the work of the school with a balance of challenge and support. Leaders at all levels work very effectively as a unified team and have a comprehensive view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The whole school has worked tirelessly to build on the outcomes of the last inspection and has successfully taken the school forward. St Joseph's has demonstrated its outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Most children join the Nursery with skills that are considerably lower than those expected for their age in all areas of learning. Outstanding care and welfare ensure that the children make rapid gains and by the time they enter the Reception class, their skills are closer to expected levels. During their Reception year, the children continue to make excellent progress and, by the end, the majority are beginning to reach the expected early learning goals. Their personal development improves greatly over time, which helps them learn increasingly well.

Children make such good progress because the curriculum, teaching, support and consideration for their welfare are all of high quality. These aspects combine to make outstanding provision that meets the children's needs very effectively. Leadership and management are outstanding. The staff work collaboratively in a strong and reflective team that is committed to providing the best for the children. The children are happy and keen to take part in all that is offered. Staff keep a very careful track of children's progress. As a result, work and play activities are planned very well to meet the needs of the individual child as well as to support the whole group. For example, assessment showed that problem-solving was a particular weakness for all children, so daily activities have been developed that set additional challenges for them. Very good use is made of the outdoor areas to extend the children's play and learning, and exciting resources such as a 'police station' and the woodland nature area motivate children to use initiative and imagination in their play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work towards increasing the frequency of outstanding lessons across the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

24 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School, Highgate, N19 5NE

You will remember that we visited your school recently for one day. I am writing, on behalf of both inspectors, to tell you what we found out about St Joseph's. We would like to thank you for making us feel very welcome and for talking to us so positively about your school. We were very impressed with the comments you made. You are a credit to yourselves, your families and your school.

Your school is outstanding. We think that it has several special qualities including:

- the impressive progress you make through the school and the high standards you achieve by the end of Year 6
- it is very clear that you think very highly of your school and you enjoy your learning enormously
- the school is led by an outstanding team of leaders, who are very well supported by the whole school community
- your behaviour, attendance and enthusiasm for learning are excellent
- your very positive attitudes help the teachers to make lessons very stimulating and rewarding
- your school provides you with lots of very interesting and exciting things to do, including after school clubs, arts activities and visits, locally and abroad
- the school helps to develop you into courteous, considerate and motivated young citizens; you take on responsibilities with vigour and enthusiasm
- your parents and carers speak very highly of St Joseph's and you report that you feel very happy and safe at school.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to improve your outstanding school even more by:

- increasing still further the number of outstanding lessons for you to enjoy.

We ask you to carry on working hard and playing your important part in making St Joseph's a school of which you can continue to be justly proud.

Yours faithfully

Gordon Ewing

Lead Inspector