

# St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110477
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337510
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ronald Hall

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	414
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Bates
<b>Headteacher (Acting)</b>	Mrs Julie Stewart
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11–12 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Priory Road Chalfont St. Peter Gerrards Cross Buckinghamshire SL9 8SB
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, looked at data collected by the school on pupils' progress, the school improvement plan and procedures for keeping pupils safe. A range of documentation and pupils' books were scrutinised. Over 100 parental questionnaires were returned and scrutinised by the inspection team.

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

- the impact of teaching and learning on all groups of pupils
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels on driving the school forward and contributing to school improvement
- the performance of all pupils, and especially boys
- the progress of all pupils.

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The few minority ethnic pupils represent a wide range of groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Mobility of pupils is relatively stable, although some year groups have suffered from higher mobility levels. Several key staff have recently left the school, with others due to leave in the near future. The school holds the Healthy School Award and has access for those with disabilities.

**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**

**3**

## Main findings

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School is an effective and happy school. Pupils and staff feel secure, take pride in their school and are proud of their achievements. Pupils enjoy attending. Typical comments include, 'We all have an excellent time here' and 'My school is a very good school because I learn a lot and everyone is friendly and caring.' Attendance is above the national average. The curriculum is broad, well balanced and organised, presenting pupils with a wide range of interesting learning opportunities. The school is developing a more creative curriculum but this is in its infancy. This creative approach gives pupils opportunities to study topics in a broader style. Visitors, such as African dancers and a range of ethnic artists, have provided the pupils with excellent sources of stimuli.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They feel the school is highly supportive and staff do all they can to make them feel happy, safe and secure.

There have been crucial leadership changes over the past three years and the substantive headteacher built upon the positive reputation of the school. However, the lack of clarity regarding the leadership of the school following the headteacher's secondment has created some concerns about instability both amongst staff and some parents. Pupils make a very positive contribution to both the school and local community. They are very polite, well mannered and positive about their education. The current acting headteacher and senior leadership team have maintained the high standards of the school. The school development plan is well focused and informed by accurate self-evaluation. Leaders and managers have created an Early Years Foundation Stage, which provides a good start to the pupils' time in the school. The gap between boys and girls and other groups has closed and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers. Attainment is improving but progress is not always as consistent as it should be. Although the attainment of pupils is good, the school's capacity for future improvement is merely satisfactory, due to the uncertainty in leadership and management.

While the quality of teaching and learning is good, this is inconsistent throughout the school. Some lessons lack pace and do not provide sufficient challenge for all pupils. This is in part due to inconsistencies in monitoring its quality by senior staff and the lack of modelling of exemplary teaching in order to create greater consistency in teaching and learning. Teachers' marking often involves comments of praise or 'could

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do better', rather than constructive comments to help pupils understand how they can improve their work. Children enter Reception at or a little above age-related expectations and make good progress; their attainment at the end of the stage is above, and in some cases, well above average. Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is not as high as would be expected, especially in mathematics in Key Stage 1 as attainment is falling due to the inconsistent teaching and lack of challenge in some lessons. However, pupils leave the school with levels above the national average. The school has generated a range of useful and in-depth data on individual pupil performance and has used this effectively to raise attainment and standards in general. Although marking and assessment are having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment, the school is aware that this is in its infancy and has yet to be embedded consistently throughout the school.

St. Joseph's has good links with several other local schools and a range of sporting organisations. The school uses these effectively to provide a range of sporting and curriculum opportunities for the pupils. There are also good links with a wide range of external agencies. The work carried out with local authority ethnic minorities' agencies is a good example of the school's inter-agency work.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by developing the consistency, frequency and rigour of monitoring across all subjects by all levels of leadership, to enhance the pace and challenge in lessons and bring about greater learning and faster rates of pupil progress.
- Raise standards in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 1, by making teaching more consistent, through the addition of greater pace and challenge for all pupils in all lessons.
- Improve the quality of learning by ensuring the consistent use of marking and assessment in the classroom so that it informs pupils on how to improve their work.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

In most lessons, pupils make good progress, with achievement for all groups being good. In a good science lesson, for example, pupils exploring forms of light used a range of skills and techniques. They were clearly focused on the learning objectives. The lesson was lively and challenging throughout, with clear enjoyment seen, and relationships were excellent. Good use was made of the interactive whiteboard and a 'Dark Tent' to explore various aspects practically. Pupils were encouraged to question and challenge throughout. The result was that all pupils made good progress and learned valuable skills for their future development.

The focus by leadership and management on improving the education for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved outcomes. These pupils now make progress in line with their peers. Pupils value both the

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support and the resources given to them to enable them to overcome their difficulties, and good assessment data is retained. Pupils who enter the school later than is usual, or who have language difficulties, are very well supported and settle in quickly and effectively. The gap between boys’ and girls’ attainment has narrowed. The more creative approach to the curriculum is beginning to give pupils opportunities to develop a greater range of skills and knowledge. The artistic and cultural opportunities they have received are good examples of this.

The pupils enjoy their learning which is reflected in their good and improving attendance. They demonstrate excellent social skills and are helpful both to each other and to adults alike. The pupils’ spiritual, social and moral understanding is outstanding. Pupils have an inquisitive approach to different cultures and faiths but the school does not do enough to develop a good understanding of different cultures. It has the Healthy School Award, which reinforces and develops pupils’ positive understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils have a good understanding of staying safe and are confident in raising concerns to the school leaders should the need arise.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

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

**How effective is the provision?**

Teachers have good subject knowledge and the skills to use different approaches in order to enhance lessons. Good use is made of resources and equipment, such as interactive whiteboards. In outstanding lessons, the levels of challenge and pace enthuse and motivate the pupils but this quality is not consistent. In lessons where

<sup>1</sup> 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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teaching was good, pupils generally knew their targets and lesson objectives but these are not consistently reinforced during lessons. Marking does not routinely inform pupils on how to improve their work and assessment is not always used effectively to inform planning. In satisfactory lessons, the pace is slower and too teacher-directed and opportunities are missed to reinforce learning and gain accurate assessments of pupils’ knowledge and understanding. Teachers set targets for their pupils and their progress is monitored but it is too early to fully assess the improvement in pupil progress throughout the school. Senior and middle managers do not review this sufficiently to ensure its accuracy, or check that marking is used effectively to support learning. Staff have worked hard to develop an approach which mixes skills and subject knowledge, in a way that allows pupils to think and learn in a broader way. A wide range of visits and visitors are used to enhance learning. There is a wide range of sporting and other extra-curricular clubs that enrich the pupils’ learning opportunities. For those for whom learning does not come so easily, the school has developed an approach which effectively matches the curriculum to the needs of the individual. This is further supported by excellent inter-agency links, which ensure the needs of these pupils are fully met.

The school is a very happy, caring and supportive environment. Pupils feel very safe and generally free from difficulties such as bullying. Parents have a very high opinion of the school and are supportive of it. Pupils play a vital role in the life of the school and community, as playground mentors and members of a very active school council, and organising a range of charity fundraising events.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Although the acting headteacher has a vision for improvement, this has yet to be effectively communicated to and shared by the staff as a whole. Senior leaders know the school well, accurately identify its strengths and weaknesses and plan for improvement. Governors scrutinise the work of the school but do not monitor every aspect as a matter of course. Governors were unaware of the issues around the leadership of the school, or the depth of concern expressed by staff and some parents. They effectively carry out their statutory duties. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements well. Middle managers are not yet sufficiently involved in making checks on lesson quality, target setting or the marking processes. This has resulted in inconsistent monitoring throughout the school, with restricting effects on pupils’ progress. Other than in the Early Years Foundation Stage, opportunities are missed

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to make the most of 'best practice'.

The school has good parental links, resulting in an effective partnership. Parents appreciate the work of the school and actively engage in promoting its improvement. However, recent staff issues and the uncertainty over the leadership of the school have led to concerns amongst the parents.

The school make good use of a range of other partnerships, to provide learning and sporting opportunities for the pupils. Links with the local high school enhances learning and provides older pupils with the opportunity to prepare for their future learning. Local sports clubs and facilities are utilised to bring expertise into the school and allow pupils to use high quality resources and centres.

The school successfully promotes equal opportunities and is a very inclusive school. School and religious principles are well modelled and taught by all staff and this has a positive impact on the pupils. The school is developing community cohesion, with excellent school and local community cohesion. National links are being developed, with the pupils participating in a number of national charity, musical and social events. International aspects involve links with various charities abroad and visits to France by the pupils.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and rapidly improving. Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well and make good progress. This is due to consistently good teaching and a

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knowledgeable, passionate staff. A prime example was a literacy session related to 'Jolly Phonics', where a puppet was used to gain the children's attention and interest. Careful and thoughtful questioning and interaction between the adult and children resulted in good progress being made by all the children. In some cases, outstanding progress is made. There is very good use of observations to record assessments which are, in turn, used to plan future learning effectively.

Children acquire the qualities they need to enable them to make good, and at times outstanding, progress in developing the skills they require in the future. This is developed through the consistent use of routines, giving children responsibility for small tasks and allowing them to initiate their own activities so that they can be confident enough to make appropriate decisions and choices. They contribute to their learning by suggesting aspects for study each week.

Children demonstrate how to stay safe and healthy through their good, and often outstanding, behaviour. Relationships between peers, children and adults are very good. Excellent positive role models reinforce and develop this further.

Assessment information is used very effectively by all staff, who carefully monitor children's progress and record it. Group and individual observations are utilised effectively to create very accurate baseline judgements. Leaders and managers give exceptional direction, with a strong focus on achievement. Transition arrangements are good and these are closely linked to the strong relationships with parents. There are good links with external agencies for staff development and to ensure the needs of all children are met. The monitoring role of the leadership and management is well embedded and they take every opportunity to refine and enhance practice further. All policies and safeguarding procedures are in place and meet requirements.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	<b>2</b>
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Parents who returned questionnaires are overwhelmingly supportive of, and happy with, the school. However, whilst they feel the teaching team is strong, there is concern regarding the uncertainty surrounding the leadership of the school. Parents feel the school is warm and supportive, with a positive learning atmosphere. They feel pupils make good progress. A few felt this was not the case for all pupils but this view was not supported by inspection findings. Inspection evidence found

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communication to be good but a small number of parents felt this was not the case.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St. Joseph's 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 128 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 414 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	63	46	36	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	69	54	57	45	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	32	65	51	19	15	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	28	67	52	20	16	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	47	37	61	48	13	10	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	38	61	48	16	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	51	60	47	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	32	63	49	6	5	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	34	55	43	22	17	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	33	62	48	15	12	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	26	68	53	12	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	32	25	57	45	28	22	7	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	49	48	38	10	8	4	3

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.



16 November 2009

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Chalfont St Peter,  
Gerrards Cross SL9 8SB**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team. Your polite and very helpful attitude towards us helped to make our visit so much more enjoyable. We were especially impressed by your positive approach, how warmly you talk about your teachers and the pride you take in your school. You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. You contribute well to your school local community and take pleasure in raising the reputation of the school. Many of you highlighted how secure you felt in school because the teachers and staff take good care of you all. You also stated you felt yours was a good school and we agree with your views.

The good relationships you have built up with the teachers and other staff encourage you to try hard and do your best in lessons. The links you have with schools and other organisations locally give you a wide range of opportunities to widen your understanding and knowledge of the world. The headteacher, governors and staff have all worked hard to make your school successful. In order to make your school even better, we have asked them to work on the following things:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all lessons are more challenging and the pace is quicker.
- Improve teaching in mathematics to ensure greater challenge for all ability groups, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Mark your books so that you understand what you have to do to improve your work.

I wish you all the best in the future and I am sure you will all continue to help make your school an even better place for you to learn.

Yours sincerely

Ronald Hall  
Lead Inspector

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