

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Shepherd Cross St, Halliwell, Bolton, Lancashire BL1 3EJ

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. They now make good progress, reaching average standards of attainment, often from low starting points. Attainment is continuing to rise across the school.
- The quality of teaching has improved as a result of effective training. It is now predominantly good and sometimes outstanding.
- Pupils with special educational needs, pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding and those who speak English as an additional language are all supported well and make good progress.
- Pupils thrive in a school where every pupil is known, valued and cared for. They behave well and attend regularly. They feel safe and secure and so they are ready and eager to learn.
- The headteacher is a very effective leader. He is supported by a talented leadership team and by a well-informed and influential governing body. There is a sharp focus on helping every child to do as well as possible and all aspects of the school's work are kept under continuous and rigorous review. This is making a significant difference to pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils make good progress overall as they move up through the school, progress is not as rapid in every class as it is in the majority. This is usually because of weaker teaching.
- Leaders have correctly identified the areas where teaching is weaker and steps are being taken to eliminate these. There has not yet been time for them to impact fully, however.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons. They listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6 and they observed the teaching of letters and sounds in Key Stage 1.
- Meetings were held with five members of the governing body, with staff, with a group of pupils and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed information from 19 responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View) and from two letters written to the team by parents. They also met with a group of parents to hear their views about the school.
- They took into account the views that staff expressed in the questionnaires they completed.
- They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance records and the school's own data on pupils' current progress.

Inspection team

Diane Auton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Deana Aldred

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to most other primary schools.
- The majority of pupils are White British. About a quarter of pupils are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds and around half of these pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average; the proportion supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is considerably above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2010. Six new teachers have joined the staff during the period since the school's previous inspection. A second assistant headteacher was appointed in September 2011. Two other members of the school's leadership team are currently on maternity leave.
- Before- and after-school care and a holiday club are provided on site by an independent company. These provisions are subject to separate inspections and reports can be found on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better in order to iron out the remaining unevenness in the progress pupils make across the school by:
 - continuing to implement the school's effective procedures for checking and improving the quality and impact of teaching
 - ensuring that teachers always keep a careful check on pupils' understanding during lessons so that they can take the appropriate steps to help them learn successfully
 - ensuring that activities in lessons always provide opportunities for pupils to organise and develop their own learning, rather than relying too heavily on direction from the teacher.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils work hard in lessons. They are eager to offer their ideas in class and they work well with a partner or in a group. They try hard to present their work neatly. They are learning to respond to the helpful advice their teachers often give them when they mark their work and this is helping them to raise the standard of their work.
- Most children start school with skills that are below those that are usually expected for their age. A sizeable minority of children have very immature skills, especially in speaking and listening. Children do well in the Reception class. They start Year 1 with very positive attitudes to school and to learning, although their literacy skills are slightly below average.
- Most pupils make good progress as they move up through the school and some make excellent progress, especially where teaching is of outstanding quality. In the minority of classes where the teaching is weaker, pupils make slightly slower progress in all subjects.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average. There has been an improving trend over the period since the school's previous inspection, with a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils who reach higher than nationally expected levels.
- Evidence from the school's data, from lessons and from the work in pupils' books all show that achievement is good, overall, in Key Stages 1 and 2. Most pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach the expected levels of attainment by the end of the year. The proportion on track to do better than this is similar to the national average and is greater than in previous years.
- The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language speeds up, year by year, as they move up through the school, because of the good support they receive. By the time they leave Year 6, their achievement compares well with that of all pupils across the country.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and those who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding all make good progress, often from very low starting points. Their achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 compares well with that of all pupils across the country.
- Systematic teaching of letters and sounds is helping pupils to become confident readers and attainment in reading has risen since the previous inspection. Most pupils reach the nationally expected levels in reading in Key Stage 1, with an increasing proportion of pupils reaching even higher standards. Daily guided reading sessions are popular with pupils and are successfully fostering their enjoyment in reading. By the time pupils leave Year 6, their attainment in reading is broadly average, overall, and the proportion doing better than this is increasing, year by year.

The quality of teaching is good

- The overall quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good since the time of the school's previous inspection and this has enabled pupils' achievement to rise. Teaching is outstanding in some lessons, but in a small minority further improvement is still needed.
- Typical features of the good teaching in the school include:
 - well-planned lessons with interesting activities that are appropriately matched to pupils' varying abilities and needs
 - clear explanations, so pupils know what they are expected to do and to learn
 - good attention to timings, so that lessons move along briskly and pupils' interest is sustained throughout the lesson
 - good teamwork between teachers and well-trained and experienced teaching assistants, so that all pupils are given the support they need.
- In a small minority of lessons, weaker teaching holds some pupils back a little. Sometimes, this is because teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to show they can get on with their work and learn on their own. At other times it is because teachers miss opportunities to check on pupils' understanding, through searching questioning and discussion during the lesson.

This means that those pupils who may not have fully understood the work are not always given all of the help they need.

- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in making sure that all pupils do the best they can. For example, in a very effective lesson in Year 3, where pupils were learning to read the time using analogue and digital clocks, the class teacher observed that the more-able pupils were coping well with the tasks she had given them. She moved them on briskly to a higher level, so that by the end of the lesson they were successfully solving 'real-life' problems, counting backwards and forwards in time and making accurate mental calculations. All of the pupils were deeply absorbed in their work in this challenging lesson, showing real enjoyment in learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good and they are polite and considerate. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there is always someone on hand to help them if they have a problem.
- Relationships between home and school are very positive. Parents' comments and questionnaire responses reflect their appreciation of everything the school provides for their children. A parent commented that the headteacher and staff 'listen to our views and are so helpful – nothing is too much trouble'. All of those present agreed and similar views were expressed in the letters the team received from parents.
- Pupils understand about different types of bullying. They say that there is no bullying or racism in school and that it would not be tolerated. They say that if they fall out with each other and they are not able to sort it out for themselves, staff will always help.
- Pupils are starting to develop responsible attitudes and this is helping their learning to progress well. In Year 6, for example, pupils say they check through their work before giving it in to be marked, to see if any corrections or improvements are needed.
- Pupils readily take on responsibility as prefects and as influential school councillors, contributing well to the good management of the school. Older pupils act as buddies to younger ones, helping them settle into school happily.
- Pupils with additional learning, health, language and social needs are supported very well and so they are enabled to access all school activities and to make good progress in their learning and their personal development.
- The school provides sensitive and nurturing support for pupils and families whose circumstances might put them at risk; staff work productively with a range of external agencies to ensure this.
- Attendance has continued to improve since the school's previous inspection and is average for primary schools across the country.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors have secured on-going improvements in the school during the two years since its previous inspection, despite changes in staffing and despite temporary absences of key leaders.
- Effective systems for leadership and management have quickly become embedded and the staff team is united and highly motivated. Senior staff are very able and are committed to driving forward improvement. Careful planning has ensured that all of their responsibilities are being carried out appropriately during the temporary absence of two key leaders.
- Progress reviews each half-term give a detailed picture of how well every pupil is doing.
- The school uses the information on pupils' progress well to identify anyone who may need extra support.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and choose appropriate actions for improvement and they evaluate their impact throughout the year.

- Teaching and learning are led and managed well. Senior staff help the headteacher to keep a regular check on the quality and impact of teaching. An effective staff training programme is in place and this supports on-going improvements well. Relative weaknesses that remain in teaching have already been identified and work to improve matters is already under way; there has not yet been enough time for all aspects of the weaker teaching to be sorted out.
- Good leadership and management underpin the success of the support provided for pupils with special educational needs, for pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding and for those who speak English as an additional language.
- The school's curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Interesting topics bring subjects together for pupils and provide good opportunities for them to practise and improve their literacy and numeracy skills when working in other subjects. Visits, visitors, including residential trips, opportunities to learn Spanish and a range of popular after-school activities all add enrichment to the curriculum.
- The local authority provides effective support for this good school, through its services that help to support pupils with additional learning and language needs and through regular advisory input.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing and of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. They work closely with the headteacher and staff, playing an active role in checking and evaluating the school's work and they offer challenge as well as great support. They manage staff performance well, ensuring that everyone is held to account for pupils' progress. Governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used to improve achievement and to help to overcome the barriers to learning that some pupils face. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively, ensuring that safeguarding procedures are well-managed and reviewed regularly. They ensure that equal opportunities are promoted and that discrimination is not tolerated in school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105223
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	404975

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Kearney
Headteacher	Paul Lock
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2010
Telephone number	01204 333055
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