

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Fiennes Road, Banbury, OX16 0ET

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress has varied widely in recent years. It has improved in the last year in reading, writing and mathematics but is not yet consistent enough in all year groups. Frequent staff changes have slowed the pupils' progress.
- Not enough teaching is at least good. Some teachers are uncertain in their understanding or use of information about pupils' progress. Teachers do not question individual pupils enough to check learning.
- Senior leaders and governors do not ensure that teachers improve their skills quickly enough.
- Too many changes, and uncertainties, in senior leadership have led to a lack of continuity and rigour in the management and self-evaluation of the school until recently.
- Although pupils have many creative and exciting learning opportunities in a range of subjects, the school does not promote the use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in a range of subjects enough to improve pupils' basic skills.

The school has the following strengths

- The two acting deputy headteachers are leading the school effectively, and are strongly supported by a resilient and positive staff. This is a major reason for the improving attainment and achievement of pupils.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school, and they have enthusiastic attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils are well looked after in a caring, happy and diverse multicultural environment.
- Parents and carers have a high regard for the school, and are especially appreciative of the good start children have to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 18 lessons or part lessons taught by nine teachers.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the joint acting headteachers, the acting deputy headteachers, members of the interim executive board and an officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They examined safeguarding arrangements, and other documents, including the school's development plans and self-evaluation, external evaluations of the school's effectiveness, health and safety logs and school policies, and a range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors took into account 23 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- The inspectors also examined questionnaire responses from 21 members of staff.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ann Short

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not make any use of alternative provision.
- There have been a number of changes in teaching staff during the last two years.
- The headteacher is on long-term absence, and was not in school during the inspection. In her absence, the school is being led by two acting deputy headteachers who are permanent members of the school staff. Immediate plans are in place for two experienced school leaders to support the acting deputy headteachers with effect from December 2012.
- For the last two years, the governance of the school has been through an interim executive board.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching rapidly so that it is typically at least good by:
 - ensuring teachers fully understand how to use the pupil tracking information when evaluating the progress of all pupils
 - strengthening the development of teachers' skills by senior leaders to improve their performance, especially ensuring that monitoring guidance is acted upon quickly and decisively
 - improving teachers' questioning skills.
- Ensure that teachers develop pupils' literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills systematically across all subjects to extend their basic skills and raise their attainment.
- Clarify the roles of senior leaders in school improvement by:
 - ensuring all leaders, including the interim executive board, have a shared understanding of the school's priorities
 - improving the consistency and rigour of school self-evaluation and its use in helping the school to become good.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards in English and mathematics have varied considerably over the last few years, so that there has been little consistency in pupils' achievement. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 during the last two years has been below the national average in both subjects and very few reached the higher levels.
- Pupils in Year 6 achieved well in 2012 because they made better progress in Years 3 to 6. However, this rate of progress has not been sustained for longer than a year at a time. The school rightly recognises that its priority is to ensure that the achievement of all groups of pupils in all years becomes consistently good.
- The examination of pupils' work and a scrutiny of the data on their progress during the inspection show that pupils' progress is improving. From their low starting points, children are achieving well in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal and social development, and in their speech and language.
- Progress is improving in Years 1 and 2 and some pupils, although not yet all, are achieving well, with many reaching the standards expected for their age.
- Pupils' skills continue to develop in Years 3 to 6 although there is still some 'catch-up' to do following past underachievement. In particular, the school is paying particular attention to the learning needs of pupils in Year 6, who are showing accelerated progress in writing this term.
- All groups of pupils achieved equally well last year. This is an improvement as in the past the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has been inconsistent. The majority of pupils who speak English as an additional language are now making good progress.
- The progress made by pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is also improving, and the school is putting much effort into narrowing the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils at an even faster pace than previously.
- There has been a real improvement in pupils' reading skills in the lower end of the school. In the recent phonic (linking letters and sounds) screening test for pupils in Year 1, their skills were above average. Pupils are keen readers, and have good library and book resources. Older pupils are also improving their phonic skills, which have not been developed sufficiently in the past, and their reading is broadly average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is at least good to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress every year and reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and especially their information and communication technology skills across all subjects. Teachers give pupils many creative opportunities, but are not using them sufficiently to develop pupils' basic skills systematically.
- Teachers have a wide range of information about how well their pupils are learning, but some teachers are unsure in their interpretation of the data on pupils' progress, and how to use this in their planning.
- Teachers have improved their questioning skills, so that pupils are sometimes encouraged to give extended answers. However, some teachers ask questions of whole groups of pupils, who often then all reply at once. Teachers do not question individual pupils sufficiently often in order to check their learning.
- Teaching is most effective, as observed in a mathematics lesson about perimeter and area in Year 5, when the teacher has good subject knowledge and tailors a number of activities exactly to the individual needs of enthusiastic pupils so that they all make good progress.
- Teachers give pupils many opportunities to discuss their learning in pairs or small groups. They

effectively encourage pupils to evaluate their own work and that of other pupils in a positive fashion, so that pupils have a wider understanding of how they learn.

- Teachers and teaching assistants generally work well together, a good example being the phonics workshops each day. Teaching assistants make good contributions, often on a one-to-one basis, to the learning and personal development of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Similarly, the small number of pupils in the early stages of learning English receives personalised support.
- The quality of marking has improved, and many pupils can recall written comments such as, 'Try to use more "ly" words', which they say helps their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the extensive grounds and playground. They feel safe, saying, 'Our teachers look after us really well.' Pupils respect each other and the older ones take good care of the younger ones.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into the school's routines and activities. The small minority who speak little English when they start school soon gain confidence with the help of adults and their friends.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning, which is particularly noticeable every morning when they are split into small groups to learn phonics and other literacy skills. They name many different activities which give them enjoyment, such as making model castles and studying the Victorians.
- Pupils from different heritages mix well together and racial comments or disagreements are unusual. No exclusions have been necessary for several years.
- Pupils report little bullying, and then only of the name-calling type. Older pupils have a good understanding of the dangers of cyber-bullying, and some are helpful in explaining the meaning of this to younger pupils.
- As a result of strong action by school leaders, attendance and punctuality have improved markedly in the last year after being an issue for improvement for several years.
- There are good links with external agencies when specialised services are needed. These are helpful in supporting pupils and families in difficult circumstances.
- Almost all parents, carers and staff believe that behaviour is good in the school. A small number of parents and carers have concerns about bullying, although their reasons are unspecified.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the school have been through a period of considerable uncertainty since the last inspection. The school has been unable to appoint a permanent deputy headteacher for some time, and there have been several changes in staff. This has caused a lack of decisiveness in identifying the school's priorities and undertaking school self-evaluation.
- The long-term absence of the headteacher has given leadership and management opportunities to two acting deputy headteachers since September. They have been successful in encouraging a stable school staff, raising morale, and continuing the improvements, instigated mainly by the last temporary deputy headteacher, in pupils' attainment and achievement.
- Other leaders, such as the mathematics coordinator, the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the special educational needs coordinator, are making effective contributions to the school's development. This indicates that the school now has the capacity to sustain improvement in the future.
- The management of teaching in the school has been weak in the past, but is now much improved as regular and rigorous monitoring takes place. However, there is not yet enough urgency in following up the guidance provided to teachers about improving their teaching skills.

- The recent improvement in the progress made by all groups of pupils has been driven by senior leaders holding teachers firmly to account for the progress and achievement of pupils in their classes.
 - The local authority has provided appropriate support for the school through difficult times. Advisors have made effective contributions to the raising of achievement in the school.
 - The school's improvement in the provision of varied and creative learning opportunities across several subjects has benefited pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and effectively encouraged their good behaviour.
 - The promotion of equal opportunities has improved, with some past underachievement eliminated, and the school makes sure that there is no discrimination through gender, disability, special educational needs or ethnic heritage.
 - The interim executive board carefully monitors the use of the pupil premium funding. The school provides additional adult support for these pupils, including extra after-hours support, one-to-one daily adult support, and new resources. The school has noted a steady improvement in the attainment and progress of these pupils but rightly recognises that this could still be quicker.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The interim executive board has been partially successful in dealing with the difficulties it inherited in the school. There have been improvements in achievement and teaching, and effective staff appointments have been made. However, some issues remain and the board is showing heightened urgency in addressing these, as it has an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A link has been established with leaders from the neighbouring high school who are supporting the present school leadership. Members have a clear understanding of their role in relating school targets to the improvement of pupils' progress and teachers' performance. They have become more active in making decisions about pay awards for teachers based on their performance targets. Members have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are in place, and have recently started reviewing school policies on a regular basis.
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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	123208
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	402144

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Hand
Headteacher	Maria Lewicki
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 November 2009
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Fax number	01295 264284
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