

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Preston

Rigby Street, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 5XL

Inspection dates

19–20 March 2013

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		Requires improvement	3
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

- At present, many classrooms have unsettled staffing; some classes have had a succession of supply teachers and this has affected pupils' motivation and progress.
- Pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is not as strong as it should be.
- Some older pupils have not mastered basic skills, such as multiplication tables, and strategies for attending to such underachievement are unclear.
- Handwriting, reading, creative writing and mathematics have, in the past, been developed in different ways by different teachers. Consequently, for instance, many older pupils do not have joined up handwriting and some are reading books that are too easy.
- More-able pupils are not always moved on to more demanding work.
- Sometimes it takes too long to change from one activity to another, particularly where movement about the school is involved.
- Pupils are not always considerate of others and there are instances of unpleasant behaviour. Some pupils have weak social skills for their age. Welfare staff are not as well regarded by pupils as they should be.
- Though recent diligence in dealing with attendance has had positive effect, it is still not good enough.
- Some senior staff are very new to their roles. Teams have been established to share responsibility for aspects of the school's work. These new arrangements need consolidation.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has a clear and accurate perception of what needs to be done and decisive action is being taken. Pupils are making better progress in lessons.
- Though teaching requires improvement overall, teaching is often good and occasionally outstanding. Marking is conscientious.
- From very low starting points, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Governors and the local authority are giving effective support to the school through a difficult period.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons, and teaching was seen in all classrooms. One lesson had shared observation with the headteacher. In addition, brief visits were made to several classrooms.
- Meetings were held with two members of the governing body, with a representative of the local authority and with a consultant educational psychologist. The inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders and a group of pupils.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included pupils' work in the current year, data on pupils' achievements in national assessments, information on pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for development. Records on provision for those pupils who need additional support, safeguarding procedures, behaviour and attendance were also examined.
- During the inspection, the whole school spent half a morning in St Joseph's Church at a Mass to celebrate the feast of St Joseph. This limited the number of lessons that could be observed.
- There were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to be recorded. However, inspectors spoke with several parents. There were 24 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Jim Bennetts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elaine Maloney	Additional Inspector
Maria McGarry	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average sized primary school.
- Almost a third of the pupils are of minority ethnic heritage; some have family heritage associated with India and Pakistan, others include pupils with heritage associated with Eastern Europe. For about one pupil in five, English is not the language of the home; a small number receive support because they are at an early stage of learning English.
- Nearly half of the pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding, considerably more than the national proportion. (Pupil premium is additional funding allocated for pupils in the care of the local authority, or known to be eligible for free school meals or whose families are in the armed forces.) The school has a small number of pupils in the care of the local authority, none from armed services families and a large number who are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils whose learning needs are supported at the level known as 'school action' is a little below average. The proportion of pupils supported at 'school action plus', or with a statement of special educational needs, is a little lower than average. Fourteen per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs compared with 19% nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There are three classes in Key Stage 1 and six classes in Key Stage 2, some classes have pupils from two year groups. The teaching of two classes is temporarily shared by pairs of teachers and three classes in Key Stage 2 have supply teachers.
- The previous headteacher left in the summer of 2012 and the two previous deputy headteachers left in the autumn of 2012. The present headteacher took up post in September 2012; this is the third school of which he has been headteacher. An assistant headteacher was appointed in January and other staff were appointed to leadership roles at that time. Two new staff will join the school in April.
- The school has a before-school care club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to be at least good and raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that by September 2013 all classes have settled staffing arrangements
 - clarifying the school's policies and practice for tackling pupils' legacy of underachievement that has accrued due to periods of weak progress as they have moved through the school
 - providing more challenge in lessons for the more-able pupils so that they achieve to their full potential
 - establishing clear strategies throughout the school for the development of pupils' handwriting, reading, creative writing and mathematics
 - eliminating the wastage of time that sometimes occurs between activities.
- Improve behaviour and its management by:
 - engendering greater mutual respect between pupils and between pupils and adults
 - where appropriate, cultivating better manners and social skills among some pupils
 - ensuring that welfare staff are properly trained for the work they do
 - working further with parents and pupils to raise attendance.

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - firming up the team structures that have been put in place and that are showing promise
 - enabling leaders who are new to their roles to establish themselves and to have access to necessary professional development opportunities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children join the nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. They are very weak in communication and social skills. They make good headway and progress is particularly strong in the reception class.
- Pupils join Key Stage 1 with skills generally lower than normal for their age. They make sound progress but by age seven standards are still a little lower than those found nationally. Progress tends to be better in Year 2 than in Year 1.
- Progress through Key Stage 2 has been variable in recent years. Data for 2012 show barely adequate progress in Key Stage 2 overall. Progress was better in English than in mathematics. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, and the school's own tracking data show that progress has accelerated for the current Year 6. Many of these Year 6 pupils are making good progress now. There are likely to be fewer high levels in national assessments than last year, but these pupils had lower starting points than those in last year's Year 6.
- Some Key Stage 2 classes have had a succession of supply teachers. While teaching at present is often effective, there has been decline in attitudes and progress in some classes due to disruption to teaching.
- There is a large range of standards among older pupils; more than usual have standards more typical of seven year olds. For some this is because they have not learnt basic skills properly in the past. Sometimes in lessons they are going through the motions of higher level work without really coping, for instance, decimal multiplication when they are not secure with the multiplication tables. Many older pupils never learnt joined-up handwriting. Handwriting throughout the school is inconsistent but this is now being attended to.
- Pupils have quite good understanding of the sounds that groups of letters make. They are often fluent with the books they have to read and usually understand the limited range of words within them. However, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and with older Key Stage 2 pupils are lower than nationally. Some should be moved on to more demanding books in order to make progress.
- Data show that in 2012 Year 6 pupils entitled to benefit from pupil premium funding made better progress than others. Consequently, they are narrowing attainment gaps in both English and mathematics with other pupils in the school. Those entitled to pupils premium benefit from the support of teaching assistants in lessons and through the nurture group. Pupils on the school's register of special educational needs made less progress than those registered nationally. However, those on the register at this school tend to have more severe needs than usual. The pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are well supported and make good progress in language development and in general learning.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In two thirds of lessons, teaching is at least good; occasionally it is outstanding. It is seldom inadequate. Teaching requires improvement due to current disruption to staffing, and because systems for ensuring that pupils make progress rapidly, and make up lost ground, are not clear enough.
- Teaching is good in the nursery and reception classes. Children are often captivated by the imaginative and exciting opportunities provided. They gain in confidence, readiness to learn, and in communication and counting skills.
- In the best lessons, expectations are high and activities have been well planned to interest pupils. Teachers make effective arrangements for pupils of different ability and more-able pupils are pressed to do harder things or express themselves more precisely. A teacher, in the role of a war-time evacuee, skilfully introduced new vocabulary such as 'tranquil' and 'horizon', which

pupils went on to use in impressive writing about impressions of the countryside. Very effective use was made of an 'agenda' for planning creative writing, recently introduced across the school.

- In weaker lessons, while the brightest of the more-able pupils are sometimes given suitably demanding work, those who are slightly less gifted are sometimes left too long on repetitive tasks that they have mastered. Sometimes, the pace is too slow; pupils do not get enough done in the available time.
- After movement about the school, it sometimes takes too long for pupils to settle. After morning break, a teaching assistant sometimes supervises a low-level activity, such as colouring pictures, while the class teacher takes a break. The use of time should be more efficient.
- Pupils' current progress is logged effectively. This ensures that, for instance, the progress being made by those entitled to pupil premium funding can be checked. However, some older pupils missed out on elements of learning in the past. There is no clear analysis of exactly what they cannot do, or a policy for attending to this. Meanwhile, some who are competent only at a low-level are given higher-level tasks to struggle through, sometimes with adult help.
- The headteacher is bringing greater coherence to the way literacy and numeracy are taught throughout the school and across the range of subjects.
- Marking is generally conscientious. However, where care has been taken, for example, to identify spelling errors, more could be done to ensure that pupils learn from the guidance.
- There is good support for pupils who are vulnerable due to their circumstances and senior staff devote a great deal of attention to such pupils and their families. Those in the nurture group begin to blossom. In-class support for weaker pupils by teaching assistants is generally effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- In the main, pupils like their school. They cite many things that they enjoy such as art lessons, physical education and the residential trip to Longridge. Behaviour in lessons is usually good, but occasionally it can deteriorate and become difficult to manage. About the school, pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils have limited social skills. They sometimes talk across one another or 'speak out of turn'. They say that behaviour on the playground or in the dining room can be poor. They give examples of name calling between boys and girls, including flippant use of the word 'gay'. They recount incidents of horseplay that have led to minor injury and consequent imposition of sanctions. Pupils generally understand what amounts to unsafe behaviour. The number of pupils recently excluded is high and the school's behaviour log shows that a firm line is now being taken with unacceptable behaviour. As a result, the behaviour of some pupils is improving.
- Pupils say that they feel they can trust many adults in the school. However, they perceive some welfare staff as hectoring and unsympathetic. The school is now ensuring that support staff are properly trained and managed. Determined action has been taken wherever welfare has been questionable.
- School staff and governors strive to improve the ethos of the school, and to cultivate greater respect and consideration between pupils and between pupils and adults. Parents to whom inspectors spoke, reflected both the positive and negative impressions that pupils have about behaviour. The school is devoting much energy to initiatives to foster better links with families. The morning care club provides a wholesome and welcoming start to the day for many pupils.
- Attendance is lower than usual in a school of this kind. Procedures to check with parents where a child is absent and, where necessary, to consider statutory sanctions, have been tightened. More work is needed with parents and pupils to raise attendance.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- There are significant strengths in the school's present leadership. However, recent radical changes need time to become fully effective: it is in this sense that leadership and management require improvement.
- From the outset, the new headteacher, assisted by the local authority, made a perceptive and accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress throughout the school. Resolute action has been taken, with the support of governors, to tackle weak teaching.
- As a consequence of firm action to eradicate inadequate teaching, several classes now have supply teachers or a temporary job-sharing arrangement. Some have had a succession of temporary teachers. The headteacher, local authority and governors are working strenuously to rectify this situation.
- Meanwhile, with support from the local authority and close checking by the headteacher, teaching has improved in classrooms that have continuity of staffing. Senior staff realise the need to clarify policies dealing with the legacy of underachievement and bring coherence to the way key subjects are taught. Headway has already been made with this. Checks on the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding are thorough.
- During this time of turbulence, good morale has been maintained. Staff questionnaires indicate strong support for changes. Appropriate new senior appointments have been made and newly-formed teams are getting to grips with their remits.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs adequately but the school is refining what and how things are taught. There are some strengths in pupils' personal development. They have a clear sense of the spiritual dimension. Many have a keen, but not always reflective, sense of right and wrong including about rewards and punishments. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are generally adequate, but with scope for improvement. Staff know that the school's ethos and pupils' personal skills need building up.
- The local authority has given good support and stands ready to do whatever is needed to rectify the present unsettled staffing situation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are assiduous in their determination to ensure that pupils have the best chances as they start out in life. They have given staunch support to the headteacher with the changes he has put in hand and hold the school leaders and staff to account. They know how things stand with the evaluation of teaching quality and consequent action. They ensure that management of teachers' performance is robust and have been fully involved in decisions on promotion or intervention to require better practice. Governors are suitably trained and experienced, work is devolved to appropriate committees and the budget is well managed. There are proper checks on the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	119430
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	401841

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	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Allen
Headteacher	Gerry O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
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