

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey

Wheatland Lane, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH44 7ED

Inspection dates 11–12 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make inadequate progress from their starting points. Attainment in English and mathematics is too low and has been over the last few years. Not enough is being done to improve pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is inadequate. There is not enough good teaching to help pupils catch up. Teachers do not check pupils' progress accurately and do not set the right work for all pupils in lessons.
- Pupils are not given enough time to respond to teachers' marking in their books and are not clear on how to make good progress.
- There is not enough time spent on teaching literacy and numeracy. Home reading books are not used well and not enough is done to improve the reading skills of pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Attendance remains stubbornly below average.
- The leaders' judgements about teaching are too positive because they do not link teaching to how well pupils make progress.
- School improvement plans are not clear about what has to improve, how this will be done and when it will happen.
- The newly appointed leaders have not yet made enough difference to teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Governors lack the knowledge needed to challenge the school effectively. The information they receive is not sufficiently accurate and they do not do enough to find things out for themselves.

The school has the following strengths

- Teachers are working hard, with the support of the local authority, to improve their practice.
- Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn. Relationships are warm and supportive.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of good teaching combined with interesting activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 18 lessons or parts of lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher. The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work in all classes. They listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6 and observed the teaching of early reading skills in the school.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with six members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and members of the school staff.
- During the course of the inspection, inspectors spoke to parents at the start and end of the school day, and took account of 15 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors considered the school's analysis of its own parents' survey. Inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the questionnaire completed during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including a summary of the school's self-evaluation, the development plan and an analysis of current data about pupils' attainment and progress. They looked at the minutes from governing body meetings and external reports from the local authority.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Sharon Bruton

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school. Numbers have risen since the previous inspection.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much smaller than average.
- An average proportion of pupils is supported at school action. A much higher than average proportion of pupils is supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is high compared to the national average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for children that are looked after, those from armed services families, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- An above-average proportion of pupils joins the school at other than normal times in the school year.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has experienced instability in staffing since the previous inspection. This includes a period of long-term absence of the headteacher. Three members of the teaching staff joined the school this academic year. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2013 and the leadership team was re-structured at that time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching, especially in English and mathematics is good or better by:
 - making sure that teachers know how well pupils are doing and plan lessons that help pupils to learn more
 - ensuring that pupils have enough time in lessons to act on the advice given in teachers' marking in order to improve their work
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and make sure pupils have challenging targets to aim for, which they can understand and that help them to improve their work.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 so they attain standards that are at least in line with the national average and make good or better progress by:
 - teaching pupils how to write at greater length and for different purposes
 - ensuring that the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and information communication technology (ICT) are taught in all subjects

- addressing gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding, including their ability to carry out basic calculations, and giving pupils more opportunities to practise these skills in lessons
 - improving the teaching of reading in Key Stage 2 so pupils can read more difficult texts
 - providing pupils with home reading books which are suited to their abilities and are changed regularly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
- ensuring that school improvement plans set out how teaching and achievement are to be improved and show what will be checked to determine if these aspects of the school are getting better
 - making sure that leaders' judgements on teachers' performance are accurate and closely linked to the progress pupils make
 - providing training for key leaders, including those who lead in English, mathematics and on assessment, to help them contribute effectively to school improvement
 - ensuring that information gained from the checks on pupils' progress is accurate and is used to quickly identify and address underachievement
 - redoubling the efforts to improve attendance.
- Improve the effectiveness of governance by:
- providing training to develop the skills and knowledge of governors so that they are able to understand for themselves the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and know how well pupils are doing
 - improving the governing body's knowledge of the school's work, its strengths and weaknesses and ensuring that they hold school leaders closely to account for their performance by robust questioning and challenge.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 at St Joseph's are too low. They have been considerably below average for the last four years and in the last two years the school has not reached the government's expected minimum standard. In 2012, attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 improved slightly; however, it was still too low in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress pupils made in these subjects was and still remains inadequate.
- Although there are signs of some improvement this year, too few pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach the expected levels in English or mathematics. Pupils' progress is still too uneven in reading, writing and mathematics because the quality of teaching is not strong enough to make up for previous shortfalls in their learning.
- As a result of changes in the way reading is taught, pupils' enjoyment of reading is increasing, and by Year 2 the majority of pupils can use phonics (the knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent) to sound out unfamiliar words. However, gaps in older pupils' reading skills have still not been adequately addressed and these pupils lack confidence when tackling new words or reading more demanding texts. This means that attainment in reading remains below average by the end of Year 6.
- Progress in mathematics is even slower than it is in English. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers do not focus enough on the gaps in pupils' mathematical skills including their weaknesses in basic calculation. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use these skills to solve problems.
- The use of pupil premium funding to support pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals has not helped to raise standards. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012, these pupils were over half a year behind similar pupils nationally in English and mathematics. The biggest gap was in reading where pupils were a year behind other pupils in the school and similar pupils nationally.
- Although there is a significant amount of emotional support for pupils whose circumstances make them at risk of failing, these pupils still underachieve. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not achieve as well as similar pupils nationally or their peers in the school. The school's assessment information shows that the support these pupils receive has improved and they are starting to make more rapid progress; however, these improvements are at an early stage and have still to make a significant difference to pupils' achievements.
- New arrivals are welcomed and helped to settle quickly into the school community. Nevertheless, given their starting points, they too, like the other pupils in the school, do not make the progress expected of them and their achievement is inadequate.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are typically well below those expected for their age, especially in personal and social development and communication skills. Very good relationships are built with parents before children start school which help their children to settle well and begin to learn. Children make good progress as a result of well-organised provision, interesting activities and good teaching.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time is inadequate. Despite recent improvements, not enough teaching is good and pupils are not learning at a fast enough rate to overcome previous underachievement. Staff changes and training provided for teachers by the local authority are helping, but the quality of teaching still varies too much between classes and too much requires improvement.
- Despite recent changes to the way pupils' attainment and progress are checked, these assessments are still not completely accurate; nor is the information gained used well enough by

some teachers. This means that the work teachers provide for pupils is too hard for some pupils or too easy for others.

- Individual targets set for pupils are used more effectively in some classes than in others. Some teachers do not expect enough from pupils and the targets they set are too low and not understood by the pupils.
- Pupils say that they find the comments teachers provide, when they mark their work, helpful. However, too few opportunities are provided to allow pupils to act on the advice given. Inspectors also saw unmarked work in some pupils' books, leaving pupils unclear how well they were doing and what they needed to improve upon.
- When teaching is at its best, teachers probe pupils' understanding through good discussions. These lessons are well planned and resources capture pupils' interests. However, the standard of written work in pupils' books is not good enough because pupils are not expected to write at length and for a range of different purposes.
- The teaching of early reading skills has improved; however home reading books are not always chosen with enough care. Additionally the school's policy of changing reading books once a week is not encouraging regular reading habits at home. Pupils say they enjoy lessons where they can offer their own ideas and share their learning. Some of the best learning seen during the inspection took place when pupils had the chance to work together in small groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy school. They are polite and friendly and keen to tell visitors about their school. However, the attendance of a significant minority is below average and there are a few occasions of boisterous behaviour in the playground; therefore pupils' behaviour and safety requires improvement.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. They are eager to learn and usually concentrate well. A few pupils sometimes find it difficult to behave in class, but they are helped to manage their behaviour well by the adults, so that there is little disruption to learning.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsible roles such as play leaders. Members of the school council take their role very seriously, for example in leading assemblies on issues such as bullying.
- Some parents, in their responses to Parent View, expressed their concerns about how the school tackles bullying. Inspectors found from discussions with pupils that they know what constitutes bullying and that bullying is not a problem because, while it does happen occasionally, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.
- A small minority of pupils raised concerns about occasional misbehaviour. Inspectors observed some overexcited behaviour on the playground and school lunchtime records show that this is the time when most incidents of misbehaviour occur. More resources and activities have recently been provided for pupils to use at lunchtime and this has resulted in fewer incidents over the lunch period. However some inappropriate behaviour remains.
- Over time, the school has made efforts to promote good attendance and to encourage pupils to attend regularly and on time. The home-school development workers play a vital role in supporting some parents and their children to develop good attendance habits. However, these efforts have had mixed results and attendance rates remain stubbornly below the national average.
- Pupils are helped to understand how to keep safe. Activities provided to promote spiritual, moral and social development capture pupils' interests well. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and positive.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not been effective in tackling pupils' underachievement and low standards. The school is too dependent on the local authority for support and is not able to move forward without external help.
- School leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are overly generous. They are not based securely on the outcomes for pupils and feedback does not give teachers accurate guidance to help them make improvements to their teaching.
- The school's strategic plan is not clear about priorities for improvement. It lacks a clear set of actions and a sharp focus on raising achievement. It does not have sufficient checks built in to make sure improvements are happening quickly enough.
- The deputy headteacher and the English, mathematics and assessment leaders are new to their roles and have not had time to influence pupils' achievement. It is evident that these new leaders are keen to improve pupils' learning and are beginning to work well in partnership with staff from the local authority. However, they lack experience in their roles and further training is needed in order to fully translate their enthusiasm into success for pupils.
- The school's assessments and tracking information about pupils' progress is not always accurate. This means that they cannot be used effectively by leaders to allocate resources or to swiftly identify pupils, or groups of pupils, who need additional support or more challenge.
- Performance management arrangements have recently been linked to the government's Teachers' Standards; however, the quality of teaching does not, in general, support the movement of teachers and leaders up the pay scales. Teachers, leaders and governors are now more aware of their responsibility for pupils' progress and attainment.
- Funding received through the pupil premium has been used to support a number of initiatives including the employment of additional staff to provide smaller classes and support groups. Evaluation of this spending is weak. Leaders and managers cannot check if the funding has raised standards for these pupils. The school does not promote equality of opportunity effectively and pupils are not equipped well enough for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils and staff appreciate the topic-based curriculum but opportunities for pupils to practise or apply their skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT are not incorporated. Pupils enjoy the range of after-school activities and trips.
- The local authority is providing intensive support for the school to boost its leadership capacity, strengthen governance, as well as to improve teaching in order to increase pupils' progress. Newly appointed subject leaders are being supported by the local authority. This is bringing about some improvement but the rate of improvement has been too slow.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is inadequate. Since the last inspection, the governing body has failed to hold leaders fully to account, particularly for the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching. Despite the recent strengthening of the governing body there are still too few governors that understand performance data. The governing body has not been provided with regular, clear and accurate information about teaching or pupils' achievement and they have not done enough to find out about the school's performance for themselves when visiting the school. This has allowed misconceptions about standards, including the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement, to be accepted with insufficient challenge. The governing body does ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet current 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	105073
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	412527

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	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eleanor Allman
Headteacher	Roberta Blakemore
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2010
Telephone number	0151 638 3919
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