

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

155 Aldershot Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 8YH

Inspection dates 9–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a much loved school where pupils do well, because they feel safe and happy.
- All are included and no one feels left out in this caring environment. Pupils respect one another and get on well together.
- The school imparts its moral and spiritual values exceptionally well to all pupils and, as a result, behaviour is outstanding.
- Pupils achieve well during their time at the school. They learn well and, from broadly average starting points, they make at least the progress expected of pupils of their age and, in many cases, more. They leave school with results that are above average and in some cases, well above.
- The Nursery and Reception classes give the children a happy and stimulating start to their education, where they learn quickly.
- The quality of teaching is good, enabling most pupils to make strong progress. Tasks are interesting and usually matched well to pupils' individual needs, enabling all groups to make similar progress so that no group falls behind.
- School leaders have created an ethos where parents and carers feel valued and where there is ready communication between school and home.
- Leaders and managers know their school well and are honest and open in their self-evaluation. Some aspects of the school's work have improved since the previous inspection: attendance has risen; and pupils play a more active part in their own learning, discussing the tasks with one another and finding things out for themselves.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Although teaching is predominantly good or outstanding, there are pockets of teaching in which pupils learn more slowly. Leaders and managers do not always spot these quickly enough.
- Teachers do not always mark pupils' spelling and punctuation systematically enough to prevent errors from recurring.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons taught by 18 class teachers across a range of subjects, four observed jointly with the headteacher or his deputy.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at samples of their work and attended assemblies.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and teachers with responsibilities for specific subjects, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the views of staff in 47 questionnaires.
- There were 91 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. Inspectors considered these and two letters they received, and also spoke to several parents and carers during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including development plans, the self-evaluation report, local authority evaluation reports, the data on pupils' attainment and progress, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and safety, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Natalia Power, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Philip Littlejohn	Additional Inspector
Deirdre Crutchley	Additional Inspector
Jane Banting	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is larger in size than the average primary school, and is in the process of expanding to three forms of entry. It currently has three classes in the Reception Year and in Years 1 and 2. There are two classes in each of the other years.
- Just over one in 10 pupils is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and those from families in the armed services. At St Joseph's nearly all the pupils eligible for the pupil premium are those entitled to free school meals, and this proportion is under half the national average.
- Nearly one third of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and this proportion is a little higher than usual. Around a fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language, and this proportion is slightly higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is broadly average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- There is no alternative provision, such as a resource unit for disabled pupils or those with special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should strengthen their programme of classroom observations by:
 - visiting classes more often
 - giving as much advice and guidance as possible to individual teachers to help them to provide the very best learning for the pupils.
- Help pupils to improve their spelling and punctuation by improving the quality of marking, so that pupils are encouraged to write accurately in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. They make at least expected progress, and often more rapid progress, during their time at the school. From starting points which are generally average, they leave school with above-average results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6.
- Children enter the school with language, number and social skills which vary but are typically in line with those expected for their age. Through energetic teaching and creative activities with a stimulating level of challenge, the children make strong progress in their learning in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Pupils continue to make strong progress overall from Year 1 to Year 6. The school goes to considerable lengths to provide support for pupils in danger of falling behind. As a result of this individual attention, all groups of pupils make strong progress. This shows how pupils benefit from the school's commitment to equality for all.
- Inspection evidence, obtained from observing lessons, looking at samples of pupils' work and talking to pupils and parents and carers, confirms the pattern of good achievement indicated by national data. Information from the school about the progress made by pupils in individual classes also shows a strong pattern overall. However, there are very occasional pockets of less strong progress, which reflect the quality of the teaching in these classes.
- Pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and those who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to others because their needs are identified early and effective support put in place. The parent or carer of one bilingual pupil appreciated the way the school recognises the value of learning two languages and commented, 'They have encouraged me to feel confident about speaking my own language to my child.'
- The school is responsive in putting in place additional support for disabled pupils and those with a range of special educational needs. The parent or carer of one pupil told inspectors that her child was 'exceptionally well catered for', and praised the school for the way it keeps parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs informed and in touch.
- Pupils do particularly well in reading, because the school uses an effective system for teaching sounds and letters and how they come together to form words (phonics). As a result, Year 1 pupils did very well in the 2012 phonics screening check. The strong focus on reading is sustained throughout the school. For example, in the 2012 tests taken at the end of Year 6, two thirds of pupils gained Level 5. The school fosters in pupils a love of reading, and they enjoy reading for pleasure.
- The school has a positive effect on the learning of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium. School leaders and governors check the progress of all these pupils and keep a close eye on how effectively the additional support for them is used. As a result, they make similar progress to all others in the school. Nationally, the Year 6 attainment in English and mathematics of pupils supported by this extra funding is around two and a half terms behind that of all other pupils. At St Joseph's, numbers of pupils eligible for the additional funding in each school year are small, and information about their attainment should be treated with caution. For example, in 2012, the nine Year 6 pupils eligible out of 61 were just over a year behind other pupils in the school in English (that is, the gap was a little wider), but only just over a term behind them in mathematics (that is, the gap was much narrower).

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers generally expect a good deal from their pupils and this is reflected in the overall strong progress they make in their learning.
- Most lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils are busy throughout. In one fast-paced Year 5 religious education lesson, for example, pupils used a variety of creative techniques to imagine what Saul would have thought and felt on the road to Damascus. Their discussions enabled one

pupil to sum up the meaning of what he had learnt by saying, 'He only just became blind, but in the past he had been blind to what he was doing.'

- Teachers ensure through effective questioning that pupils have as many chances as possible to speak and be heard in the classroom. This focus on speaking and listening skills begins in the Nursery and Reception classes, where the adults ask the children questions that require more than a 'yes' or 'no' response. For example, children in one Reception class were encouraged to talk about how trains look and move, and one pupil was stimulated to write, 'It has a funnel. It goes on a trac [*sic*].'
- Tasks set by the teachers usually have a good element of challenge, matched well to pupils' abilities, so that they are encouraged to aim high. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were immersed in finding ambitious words and phrases, using dictionaries and thesauruses to help them, and the teacher provided exceptional individual support for each pupil, enabling them to enjoy investigating language for themselves.
- Where teaching is less successful, there is no underlying pattern, and the underperformance tends to be sporadic. This reflects the way teachers do not always receive enough sustained support from leaders and managers to understand how to raise their performance.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, helping them individually and in small groups, and working in effective partnership with the class teachers. This enables pupils with a range of additional needs to make progress in line with others.
- Marking provides pupils with clear advice on how they can improve their thoughts and ideas. However, teachers do not always insist that pupils write their ideas using correct spelling and punctuation and, as a result, pupils are sometimes allowed to be a little careless in their accuracy and to repeat errors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' outstanding behaviour comes in large part from the calm and welcoming ethos of the school, where each individual, whether child or adult, is valued. From the earliest years, the children are ready to share and take turns. Inspectors enjoyed seeing children in the Nursery, directing one another's acting in the role-play area.
- Pupils' exemplary behaviour reflects the school's extremely strong commitment towards their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the whole school, strongly supported by invited parents, carers and relations, showed their enthusiastic enjoyment of an assembly on animals, confidently presented by children from one Reception class.
- Pupils are highly considerate towards one another. They told inspectors that pupils are rarely unkind to one another and that there is no actual bullying such as racist or cyber-bullying. They reported that, if they have any concerns, they know whom to turn to. One pupil said, 'There's always someone there for you if you're down.' As a result, they feel very safe in school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand, for example, the risks involved from fires or crossing the road, or communicating with strangers in person and online.
- Pupils are extremely eager to learn. A typical comment from one was, 'I love school because I get to learn things that I didn't know before.' They are attentive in class and make an exceptional contribution to their own learning.
- Almost all parents and carers who spoke to inspectors or responded to the online survey of parents' and carers' views agreed that their children are safe and happy at the school, and that behaviour is good. One parent or carer wrote to inspectors to say, 'Having visited other schools in the area, St Joseph's felt like coming home.'

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by his deputy, has created a strong team ethos. Staff showed in their responses to the staff questionnaire, and through discussion with inspectors, that they are entirely positive about the school and its management.

- School leaders foster good relations between school and home, and parents and carers told inspectors that they feel involved and valued. The school keeps parents and carers well informed, for example, through interesting newsletters which include regular examples of pupils' work.
- Though at the previous inspection the school's overall effectiveness was graded outstanding, the key areas of teaching and learning were not, and this remains the case. Under current guidance, a school cannot be graded outstanding unless the teaching is outstanding.
- However, the school has not stood still since the previous inspection. Leaders, managers and governors work well together and have a strong commitment to improving the school. Attendance has risen, and the school has fully met its recommendation from the previous inspection to help pupils to become more actively engaged in their own learning. With its honest and realistic understanding of its own performance, and plans for the future which cover the right priorities, the school is well placed to improve further.
- School leaders generally monitor the quality of the teaching well, and teachers told inspectors how much they value the support and additional training they are given. As a result, pupils are helped to make good progress and the school ensures good value for money from their teachers. However, leaders do not visit all classes often enough to pick up occasional instances where pupils do not learn quickly enough. Consequently, teachers do not always receive the continuing advice and guidance they need to iron out occasional inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The helpful support the school receives from the local authority is appreciated by the school, and has helped it to continue to move forward.
- The school keeps pupils safe and ensures that those who work with them have been properly checked.
- The curriculum generally prepares pupils well for the next stage of schooling, and real-life opportunities, such as the current building works, are used effectively to help pupils to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, Year 4 pupils used their mathematical skills to design a new pond area for the school. The school offers pupils a good range of experiences beyond the classroom, including many exciting outings, clubs and activities. For example, pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed the residential trips to Dorset and the Isle of Wight.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body takes an active interest in the school and works supportively with school leaders and staff. It is kept well informed about how pupils are doing through detailed headteacher's reports, and governors are trained in understanding information about school performance.
 - Governors know how well teachers are performing and understand the link between teachers' performance and the good progress made by pupils. They work collaboratively with school leaders, encouraging teachers to gain skills and rewarding them appropriately.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the various ways of measuring pupils' achievement, and ask the necessary searching questions of leaders and managers to ensure that all pupils do as well as they can.
 - Governors keep a firm hand on the school's budget, ensuring that funds are well spent, particularly at this time of expansion and building works. They also carefully check the uses to which the additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is put, ensuring that the school provides value for money.
 - Governors are well trained, particularly in safeguarding, and new governors receive effective training.

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	131112
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	412384

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	564
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Stokes
Headteacher	Stephen Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2010
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