

St Joseph's Stockport Catholic Primary School

Etchells Street, St Petersgate, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 1EF

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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.

- The headteacher's dynamic leadership has been pivotal in driving the school's rapid improvement this year.
- Achievement is good. Pupils' progress has accelerated considerably and their attainment has risen. This is because the quality of teaching has improved.
- Teachers' skills have developed well as the result of targeted training and support from senior leaders, the local authority and a partner school.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. They make good progress in learning how to get on with others.
- Exciting topics, drawing on several subjects, have increased pupils' enjoyment of learning. Consequently, they are enthusiastic about school life and behave well. Their attendance has improved markedly.
- Christian values and practice, built into the daily life of the school, make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The governing body plays a highly effective part in leading the school's improvement through well-judged strategic decisions and tough levels of challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Overall, pupils' attainment is average. It is weaker in writing than in other subjects because pupils make slower progress developing the skills they require in this area.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects are not planned systematically enough to make the best possible contribution to their learning.
- Although middle leaders have begun to grasp their responsibilities and lead improvements, leadership at this level is not fully embedded in the school's systems.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, including seven jointly with the headteacher. They listened to some pupils reading in Years 1 and 3.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the school council, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at pupils' work and examined a range of the school's documentation. This included: analyses of pupils' progress and attainment; safeguarding records and those relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; reports to the governing body; and reports from the local authority.
- Inspectors asked a number of parents and carers for their views on the school during informal conversations in the morning as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Jane Austin, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Drew Crawshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British: a small number come from a range of minority ethnic heritages and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported by school action is well-above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The percentage of pupils for whom the school is allocated pupil premium funding is slightly higher than average. This is additional government funding for supporting pupils known to be entitled to free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those who have a parent serving in the armed forces.
- More pupils than is usual join and leave the school during the school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, the minimum attainment and progress expected of pupils.
- When the school was last inspected, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to provide an adequate education for pupils.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2012, initially on a temporary basis, but now on a more permanent footing. An acting deputy headteacher, seconded from a local school, is working at the school full time for this academic year.
- The school works in close partnership with a local outstanding primary school led by a National Leader of Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to become outstanding, raise attainment to above average, focusing particularly on writing, by:
 - ensuring that opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills in literacy and numeracy are woven coherently through the entire curriculum
 - embedding thoroughly the roles of middle leaders as key drivers of improvements to pupils' learning and attainment.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved because their progress in lessons has increased markedly and is now good. Teachers now know how well pupils should do: improved teaching is accelerating learning and ensuring that many more pupils are reaching their challenging targets.
- Attainment, which is average overall by the end of Year 6 and across Key Stage 2, is rising. Opportunities to use basic skills in subjects other than English and mathematics are contributing to pupils' learning, although these need to be planned coherently across all subjects.
- The results of this year's national assessments for Year 2 pupils have risen sharply to above average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and mathematics went up considerably. There were improvements in writing too, but fewer pupils achieved the higher levels. The school's data show weaker performance in writing across the school.
- This year there is a substantial increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 phonics (the link between letters and sounds) test.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. The school's analysis shows there are no marked differences between the performance of groups of pupils, including those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding. This funding has been used effectively, in part to enhance the management and support for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. They make the same good progress as their classmates because the help they receive is now targeted more precisely on their individual needs.
- From broadly average starting points, children in the Reception class also make good progress overall. Assessments are used well to identify areas in which children's skills are developing more slowly. Targeted activities and adult support are put in place to improve children's abilities in these areas.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved so pupils' learning has accelerated and is now good. In almost all lessons teachers make good use of what they know about each pupil's attainment to set work that helps them all to learn well. This was evident in a Year 3 mathematics lesson seen during the inspection, where the challenge in word problems using division with remainders was carefully graduated to enable pupils to take the next step in their own learning.
- Lessons are planned well to motivate pupils and incorporate a good balance of opportunities for pupils to listen, answer questions, reflect on their work, discuss it with a partner, and engage in practical tasks. Resources are chosen carefully, both to match the learning planned and to grab pupils' interest. Year 1 pupils were captivated by the complex illustrations in a picture book and enjoyed the challenge of working out the story's setting.
- Teachers use questioning well to help pupils think more deeply about what they are learning. They model technical terms clearly and this helps pupils develop the vocabulary they need to talk about and understand what they are learning.
- Where lessons observed were less successful, the link between the purpose of the lesson and the tasks set was not clear enough. On occasion, teachers did not build enough small steps into lessons to help pupils grasp new ideas.
- In the main, pupils' work is marked well. In the very best practice there is a detailed dialogue with pupils about their successes, next steps and difficulties. Pupils say they appreciate this. They take seriously the responsibility for assessing their own work, and that of their classmates, and are keen for teachers to check on this.
- In Reception a purposeful atmosphere, effective routines and good relationships all contribute well to a positive environment for learning. Effective use is made of both the indoor and outdoor spaces to provide plenty of opportunities for children to develop their literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening skills. Children's personal and social skills have developed well this year

because adults have consistently high expectations and manage behaviour well.

- Throughout the school, teaching assistants are well briefed about the activities they undertake in lessons. Whether they are working with higher-ability pupils or those who find learning more difficult, they make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They are skilled at questioning pupils to draw out learning, as well as selecting resources which help pupils to grasp new ideas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils generally get on well with one another and have good skills in working collaboratively. Relationships with adults are good. Pupils are friendly and polite to visitors and talk proudly about their school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. In lessons they usually listen attentively and take care over their work. Occasionally, pupils become restless when the steps in learning they are being asked to take are too big. Pupils say they enjoy school because lessons are interesting and fun. They are enthusiastic about the visitors and visits that make learning more exciting. Parents confirmed that their children enjoy school and are keen to attend.
- Attendance has risen markedly and is broadly in line with the national average. The school's procedures for following up absences and poor punctuality are systematic and rigorous. Consequently, there has been a reduction in the number of pupils who are persistently absent and late to school.
- Pupils and parents spoken to say there is very little bullying and they are confident that, should any occur, it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively by the headteacher and staff. Pupils are helped to understand the various types of bullying, including through personal and social education and assemblies.
- Pupils say they know how to stay safe, for instance when using the internet. They say they feel safe in school and trust the staff to keep them safe. The school council meets regularly; members are confident that staff take their views into account. They send the minutes of their meetings to the headteacher when he is unable to attend.

The leadership and management are good

- When the headteacher took up post he made a commitment to lead the school towards excellence through establishing a clear vision, building good relationships and improving the environment. His energetic and determined leadership has ensured that a great deal of progress has been made in a short period towards this goal. He has been ably assisted in this by the acting deputy headteacher.
- The headteacher has rapidly gained the commitment of staff, pupils and parents to his clear vision for the school at the heart of its community. Parents spoken to were universal in their praise for the enthusiasm their children now have for learning and for substantial improvements in communication. All value the high visibility of the headteacher and availability of teachers at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Senior leaders have successfully established the systems needed to drive the school's improvement. Challenging targets are set for pupils and their progress towards these is tracked regularly and reliably. Teachers provide extra help for those who are falling behind and are held to account for the progress of their pupils.
- There has been an intense and successful focus on improving the quality of teaching. In this, as in many other respects, the support of the local authority and partner school has been central. Training, coaching and well-targeted monitoring by senior leaders have contributed very effectively to the rapid improvements to teaching seen this year.
- Leaders have been robust in addressing inadequate teaching. Targets set through performance management, based on the new *Teachers' Standards*, are suitably demanding. Staff are aware that there must be a close link between pay and responsibilities.

- Through training, middle leaders have gained the understanding and skills to fulfil their responsibilities. A consistent whole-school approach to subject leadership has been established. However, these developments are quite recent and more time is needed to fully embed the roles of middle leaders in driving improvement.
- A much more rigorous approach to identifying and meeting the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is having a positive impact on learning for these pupils. A dual emphasis on meeting pupils' needs in class, accompanied by careful analysis of the impact of any additional help provided, means that leaders and teachers are now much clearer about what works for each pupil.
- The curriculum is improving. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning has increased because their interests and questions are taken into account when teachers plan topics. Effective links are made between subjects so that learning is much more relevant. Opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills are included but the whole-school planning for a coherent approach to this is work in progress.
- A good range of visits and visitors enrich pupils' learning. For instance, the Year 3 class understood much more about the Minotaur after experiencing the labyrinth of passages in the local air-raid shelters. Older pupils and their parents were enthusiastic about the recent outward-bound residential trip. Such visits contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is fostered very well through the Christian ethos which permeates school life.
- Staff have valued and benefited from the professional development opportunities provided by the partner school, and other local schools. The local authority's very considerable, well-targeted support and high level of challenge have been critical to the school's improvement. There are sensible plans in place for the gradual reduction in support already underway to continue, matched closely to the school's needs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has played a significant part in the school's improvement, making key appointments, brokering staff secondments and facilitating training for middle leaders. The strong lead provided by the Chair, combined with the professional expertise of a number of governors, has enabled the governing body to provide considerable challenge as well as support to senior leaders.
 - Governors have been determined to ensure that the school has systems in place to evaluate pupils' progress, accurately gauge the quality of teaching and identify priorities for improvement. Governors have visited the school, including to look at pupils' work and see how well they are doing. They approved the deployment of the pupil premium funding and monitor its impact. The governing body has appropriate oversight of the management of teachers' performance.
 - The Chair is building the capacity of the governing body for the future. Several governors are shadowing the role of the Chair to gain experience of what is required.
 - The governing body ensures that the school meets the requirements for safeguarding pupils.

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	106122
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	420660

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Woodhouse
Headteacher	Dominic Mulcahy
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2011
Telephone number	0161 4805029
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