

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

North Road, Hertford, SG14 2BY

**Inspection dates** 2–3 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Pupils make good progress because they are taught well throughout the school. Teaching is typically good, and some is outstanding.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make increasingly good progress in all areas of their learning and development in a stimulating environment.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. They are welcoming, courteous and well mannered.
- Pupils feel secure and valued within the school community.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are a credit to the school and to their families.
- The headteacher, staff and governors share high expectations for all pupils to achieve well.
- Their ambition and a strong sense of commitment and teamwork among staff have helped to ensure that teaching and learning have improved markedly this year.
- The governors are regular visitors to the school and know it well. They have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do next in order to improve further.
- Parents are very positive about the school and praise the leadership, teaching and quality of care that the school takes for their children.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers do not always allow pupils enough time to talk together about their learning.
- The skilled, expert questions they ask pupils to extend their learning in some lessons are not yet a routine feature across the school.
- Standards in mathematics were not as high as in English last year. Teaching of mathematics has improved this year, but pupils are not yet making consistently rapid progress in the subject.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons, four of which were seen together with the headteacher or the assistant headteacher. Nine teachers and their teaching assistants were seen working with their pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books. They listened to some pupils from Years 2 and 6 reading, and attended daily registration time.
- Inspectors met with pupils from Years 5 and 6, including the house captains, and talked with pupils during lessons, in the playground and as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, team leaders, subject leaders and governors. Inspectors also gathered views from a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 50 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke informally with parents and carers at the start of the school day. They also considered letters received from individual parents.
- Questionnaires completed by 14 members of staff were taken into account.
- A wide range of school documents were reviewed. These included development plans, policies, the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, various monitoring, safeguarding and planning records, information provided for families and governing body documents.

## Inspection team

Ruth Dollner, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Miller

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Joseph's is an average-sized primary school mainly serving the local Catholic community within the broader Hertford area.
- During this year the headteacher has shared his time between St Joseph's and another local school he supports.
- Nearly all of the pupils come from White British backgrounds, and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is very low.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is well below average.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently at least good and more often outstanding, particularly in mathematics, by making sure that:
  - teachers do not talk for too long
  - pupils have the maximum possible time to discuss and reflect on their learning, both together and with their teachers
  - teachers frequently ask pupils probing questions during lessons to assess how well they are learning, clarify any misunderstandings and challenge them to think hard
  - the best practice in the teaching of mathematics is extended across the whole school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the nursery with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding below those expected for their age. They make good progress in both the Nursery and Reception Years and are prepared well to start their National Curriculum work in Year 1.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress between Years 1 and 6 has been uneven and their attainment fell to average levels. Standards have improved again since 2011. Pupils are now making good progress. However, this remains uneven, particularly in mathematics and more generally for pupils in Year 3, where there have been four different teachers over the course of the year.
- School data and the work shown in pupils' books show that the current Year 2 pupils have progressed at almost twice the nationally expected rate in reading, writing and mathematics. They are making particularly good progress in learning about the sounds that letters make (phonics) and are able to apply these skills effectively in both their reading and writing work.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 recovered to above average overall in 2012. It was above average in English, but it was only average in mathematics and improving achievement in this subject has been a major priority for the school. School data show that current Year 6 pupils have made good progress and their attainment is now above average. The work seen in lessons supported this judgement, although it has yet to be validated through the Year 6 national tests.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. They make good progress thanks to good planning to meet their specific needs and well-chosen support from teachers and support staff.
- As there are so few pupils eligible for the additional government funding, the impact of this in national tests and assessments cannot be reported without potentially identifying individuals. However, these pupils generally make good progress in line with their classmates. The school uses the funding to provide additional support from adults, particularly in the teaching of phonics and number work, and to subsidise activities and trips so that no-one loses out.
- Outstanding progress was seen in some lessons during the inspection. In a Year 6 geography lesson, pupils applied their extensive knowledge of coastal erosion to both their creative and factual writing work. They made rapid progress as they put themselves in the place of people whose homes and livelihoods were being destroyed by the force of the sea. This also contributed significantly to their spiritual and social development.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. Teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to learn. Teachers and teaching assistants develop positive working relationships with the pupils, which underpin very effectively their enthusiastic attitudes to learning.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers use expert questioning skills not only to check pupils' understanding but also to challenge them to reflect on their ideas and thinking. This leads to excellent progress within lessons. However, this good practice is not applied consistently well across all lessons or year groups. The school recognises that developing this aspect of teaching is a priority in the drive to make teaching outstanding.

- In a Reception lesson the teacher demonstrated very clearly how to craft questions about a range of objects brought in from home including photographs and toy cars. Children then made rapid progress in developing their own questioning skills. In a Year 6 lesson using number sequences on credit cards, the teacher constantly asked pupils questions that were skilfully aimed at building up their learning in small steps. This led to pupils reaching high standards.
- Teachers often plan opportunities in lessons for pupils to work together with their 'learning partners'. However, this way of working is not consistently well established across the school. In the few cases where teaching was less than good, pupils did not have enough time to talk in a sustained way about their learning, or to challenge each other's thinking. In some lessons teachers simply talked for too long, thus limiting the time for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.
- These weaker aspects of teaching were often seen in mathematics, and prevented pupils from reaching higher standards. In a Key Stage 2 lesson on time, for example, pupils were not asked to share their understanding of the key vocabulary needed to be successful with their learning with each other, or with the teacher.
- Teachers have worked hard to improve the quality of their mathematics teaching in order to improve pupils' standards, and with some success. They are focusing sharply on enabling pupils to apply their mathematical skills in more practical ways across a wide range of subjects to improve pupils' achievement. Some outstanding progress in mathematics was clear in pupils' books, particularly in Year 2, but this is not typical and the standard of teaching is not yet consistently high.
- Many lessons help to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In Year 1, pupils talked about how to become 'the best friend they could be'. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson pupils worked collaboratively to place shapes on a Venn diagram made from hoops. They respected each other's decisions but challenged each other maturely.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Behaviour is outstanding, and not simply because staff manage behaviour consistently and effectively. Pupils' attitudes to learning are almost always impeccable and contribute exceptionally well to the good progress they are making. Attendance and punctuality to school are above average. This reflects the pupils' commitment to the school and to their learning.
- Pupils are actively involved in school life and its development. They have, for example, played an important role, alongside staff, governors and parents, in developing the school mission statement. They are proud of this and keen to talk about it.
- An important strength of the school is its welcoming and supportive environment. Parents told inspectors how much they appreciated the ways the school balanced the academic and personal development of their children. Pupils' specific individual needs are identified quickly, and support is swiftly and effectively tailored to meet their needs.
- Pupils are developing into mature young citizens at St Joseph's. They welcome visitors to the school whole-heartedly. They are polite, helpful, friendly, reflective and respectful. Pupils of all ages when reading or talking with inspectors frequently greeted them with, 'How are you today?' or 'Are you having a good day?' They all showed genuine interest in the answers. Such approaches indicate the strength of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their understanding of peoples' differences and similarities.

- Parents' views of the school are very positive. They feel that their children are happy, safe and well cared for, and that any issues they raise are dealt with quickly and highly effectively. There is a strong sense of community in and around the school. Parents point to the warm and nurturing ethos underpinning the life of the school. This was seen very clearly at the annual swimming gala at the school's own swimming pool, when pupils waited patiently for their turn and cheered each other on enthusiastically.
- Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are extremely rare. Pupils understand very well how to keep each other safe. They are aware of the different types of bullying and believe that 'bullying week' helps to raise awareness and their understanding that prevention is better than cure.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher provides strong, dynamic leadership and is ably supported by the assistant headteacher and the governing body. Team and subject leaders share the senior leaders' determination to improve. The staff's openness of mind and willingness to act decisively on constructive feedback support the school's good capacity for further improvement. Such attitudes make an important contribution to the school's positive approach to ensuring that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Staff who completed questionnaires were unanimous in their strong support for the leadership team and are proud to work at St Joseph's.
- Strong and effective leadership at all levels means that the school has made good progress on improving teaching and mathematics this year. The school's evaluation of how well it is doing is clear and accurate, and the results have led to effective and detailed improvement planning with clear success criteria so that the school can be held to account by the community it serves.
- The monitoring of teaching is rigorous, and feedback by senior leaders is focused sharply on improving pupils' learning and achievement. Subject and team leaders provide good-quality support and advice for other staff through their regular monitoring of lessons and the training they provide. They seek external help to confirm their judgements, and do not hesitate to evaluate their own effectiveness in improving outcomes for pupils.
- The school has identified the right priorities to improve teaching further. The sharing of good practice by subject leaders has helped teachers to explore ways of making mathematics more practical, and to developing additional ways to help pupils solve mathematical problems. Most teachers are planning to ensure lessons are engaging and involve collaboration between pupils.
- The local authority adviser has provided a good level of challenge to the school while supporting it well, particularly by helping staff to improve their skills in analysing data on pupils' progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well informed about the school's performance in relation to other schools nationally. Governors provide good support to the school and hold it to account well. They visit the school regularly and take an active part in its life and work. New procedures introduced at governing body meetings this year have ensured that governors regularly ask leaders challenging questions about the school's performance.
  - Governors actively seek training to keep their skills up to date and enhance their work.
  - The governing body systematically checks on the effectiveness of teaching, and monitors how well staff are meeting the targets set for their performance.
  - It also ensures that all national safeguarding requirements are met.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117436
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	412331

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Zsibrta
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Kendal
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 June 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 583148
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