

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Limes Avenue, Darwen, Lancashire, BB3 2SG

Inspection dates 10–11 September 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		Good	2
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

- Not enough teaching is consistently good or better.
- At times, teachers teach the same thing to a whole class together and this slows the pace of learning for the most-able pupils.
- Teachers' marking, particularly of pupils' writing, does not always help them to improve their work.
- Standards are below expectations because there has not been enough good teaching to enable some pupils to make expected and better than expected progress.
- Pupils' progress in improving their writing is slower than their progress in reading and mathematics.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have introduced a range of plans and actions but in the past these have not improved teaching or pupils' achievement quickly enough.
- Governors have not always held senior leaders to account well enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have worked effectively in partnership with the local authority and an outstanding academy. This has brought about notable improvements in teaching, especially that of mathematics and reading.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards each other, the adults around them and are keen to learn.
- Pupils' attendance is above average.
- Pupils feel safe and they know how to stay safe.
- There are good links between school and home and families value their school.
- The curriculum allows pupils to learn beyond the classroom and pupils enjoy a variety of trips including an annual residential stay for Year 6.
- A new tracking system has been introduced to enable closer checks to be made on pupils' progress and to help teachers to plan work to match pupils' ability.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed seven teachers and visited 16 lessons. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, senior staff and leaders with responsibility for a specific subject, parents, members of the governing body, a national leader in education who is working with the school and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- The inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the results of the school's most recent survey of parent views. The 10 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Louise Murphy

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below that found nationally. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average as are those who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and this was included in the inspection.
- There have been several staff changes and some long term absences since the previous inspection.
- The school is working with the local authority and Wensley Fold Church of England Primary Academy.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all is consistently good or better and promote pupils' good achievement by ensuring that:
 - lessons provide sufficient challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able
 - there is consistency in the quality of teachers' marking so that pupils have a clear understanding about what they need to do to improve their learning, especially in writing
 - pupils develop skills to independently check and improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - checking more thoroughly that information on the progress of pupils' learning is being used appropriately by teachers to plan stimulating lessons which accelerate pupils' learning
 - providing more opportunities for staff to observe good and better teaching
 - the headteacher and senior leaders checking that actions put into place are focused on and successful in increasing the rate of progress for all pupils over a sustained period
 - developing the capacity of the governing body to work effectively with the senior leadership team to hold the school, including the headteacher, to account for continuous improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 declined in both English and mathematics in 2011 and again in 2012 due mainly to turbulence in staffing. From standards in 2012 that were well below national averages, the school's actions, in partnership with the local authority, have led to improvements. In 2013, pupils' standards were below national expectation in reading and broadly in line in mathematics by the end of Year 6. There is now a whole-school systematic approach to teaching mathematics and reading. Writing remains lower than expected but improving.
- Most pupils leaving school in Year 6 in 2013 made the progress expected of them in English and mathematics, but too few did better than this.
- Standards in the current Year 6 are higher than the previous cohort and achievement is continuing to improve. However, standards are still behind where they should be in some other year groups because there is not enough good teaching to boost their progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage there are effective links between school and home which help the children to settle quickly. Staff ensure a secure and happy environment which contributes to children in Reception quickly building good relationships with each other and the adults around them.
- Most children start school with skills that are similar to those expected for their age other than in number and letter recognition which for some is lower than expected for their age. They make the progress expected of them in the Early Years Foundation Stage and there is recent evidence of improving progress. This is as a result of a curriculum which provides a balance of activities led by adults and opportunities for children to play together and find out things for themselves. Since the previous inspection, improvements have been made to the outdoor learning opportunities which the children really enjoy.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are now well supported and make similar progress to their peers. Those pupils eligible for the pupil premium make similar progress to all pupils and some do better as a result of additional support carefully targeted by senior leaders. The most-able pupils have not been making as much progress as might be expected but leaders and managers are addressing this with, for example, some pupils now being taught in a higher year group for some subjects. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- Improvements to the way in which pupils are taught to read from an early age led to the school's results in the 2013 Year 1 reading check being above the national average. This was a significant improvement on the previous year when the results were below the national average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across all lessons, both over time and during the inspection.
- Teachers do not always plan precisely enough for the range of abilities in their class to ensure that pupils continually reach their full potential. Sometimes, too long is spent on whole-class introductions to lessons which holds the most-able pupils back and prevents them from getting on with their work and moving on more quickly. Similarly, some pupils' learning is unnecessarily interrupted when the lesson is stopped for the teacher to help those pupils who are struggling. Additionally, the most-able pupils are prevented from continuing with their work and learning when the whole class is brought together at the end of each lesson to check on their learning.
- Work is regularly marked but there is inconsistency across the school in how well this informs pupils of how to improve their work, especially in writing. Pupils do not always have enough time in lessons to respond to marking and to correct and improve their work. Some pupils lack the skills to edit and check their work, particularly in writing.
- Developing pupils' reading skills from an early age has been a focus of the school. The teaching

of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is a strength of the school and has resulted in pupils gaining confidence in their reading abilities.

- Where teaching is good, teachers plan lessons well so that tasks are at the right level of difficulty for all pupils, they share with pupils what is to be learned and they explain to pupils how they themselves can judge how well they have done.
- The teaching of mathematics is often good. This is because the work set is closely matched to pupils' needs and practical equipment is used well to help pupils develop mathematical understanding.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning when instructed well by the teacher. They provide good support in class and also when they take groups of pupils out of class for specific help. They work well to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This includes making sure these pupils are also given opportunities to work independently. They always encourage pupils to do their best.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour on the playground and in most lessons is good. Pupils from different ages work well together and care for each other. Older pupils encourage younger pupils to play well together. This was seen at first-hand by the inspectors as, during the first two weeks of their school life, Reception pupils are closely supported by Year 6 mentors.
- Pupils respond well to the spiritual, moral and social guidance they receive. They develop good attitudes to life and learning. They have a clear sense of right from wrong and embrace new experiences enthusiastically. Through a network of schools, pupils visit other schools and welcome pupils from other schools to enable them to share their experience of different cultural backgrounds.
- Pupils are encouraged to become responsible citizens. Pupils help to raise funds and organise charity events. The school plays a valuable role within the local community.
- Behaviour is managed well in most lessons by teachers and support staff. There is a traffic light system which the pupils clearly understand and which provides support for pupils who need help in behaving appropriately. A rewards system is well used to motivate pupils with their behaviour, reading and homework generally.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and this is supported by the views of almost all parents. Pupils say that bullying is rare but that systems and procedures are in place and they would trust the staff to deal with it well. Pupils are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, especially regarding new technology and during the inspection the focus of the topic was internet safety. Pupils are confident to share their worries with staff because they trust them.
- The school makes sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe and prepares them well for the future. Lessons in physical education and activities after school are enjoyed by pupils and this encourages them to pursue sports which help them to stay healthy and promotes their well-being. In 2013-14 there are plans to use additional funding to develop skills in dance, with the support of the local secondary school.
- Attendance is good, as is punctuality. The school works well with external agencies to provide support for families who need help.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have not improved to be consistently good since the previous inspection; therefore, leadership and management require improvement.
- Leaders' checks on the school's performance have identified some of the appropriate key areas for school development. The headteacher has readily accepted appropriate support from and worked closely in partnership with the local authority. She has also worked effectively with a National Leader in Education (NLE). Staff are working closely with Advanced Specialist Teachers

from an outstanding academy to develop their areas of responsibility. The headteacher has developed a more stable staff and appointed new middle leaders, which has helped to secure improvement.

- A new system to check how well pupils are progressing is being used by all leaders and class teachers. This information is used to plan swift support for those who need extra help. Although teaching has been strengthened across the school, the headteacher does not yet check thoroughly enough that teachers' planning of lessons consistently helps all pupils to reach their full potential.
- New initiatives introduced to the school are not always checked quickly enough by senior leaders to measure the impact on pupils' progress.
- Staff are motivated and demonstrate a shared sense of responsibility and commitment to improving the school further. Training and targets are linked to the school's priorities for improvement but staff do not yet have enough opportunities to observe good and outstanding teaching in order to improve their own practice sufficiently.
- The curriculum has been adapted and there are increased opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. Since the previous inspection, outdoor learning has improved for the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils and is being extended through to Key Stage 1. Pupils value their trips beyond school and Year 6 talk excitedly about going on their residential visit later in the year.
- Pupils enjoy meeting at the breakfast club which is well managed by the school.
- The school has a strong ethos of care, inclusion and equality. It carefully identifies pupils' needs and offers support for these pupils to learn alongside their peers. This ensures all pupils make similar progress.
- Leaders and governors have worked diligently to form productive partnerships with parents. School questionnaires to parents and those parents who responded to Parent View indicate that most parents value and support the work of the school. A small number of concerns relating to behaviour management were raised through Parent View and explored by the inspectors who are satisfied that appropriate systems and procedures are being followed and the number of incidents of poor behaviour has declined.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body now recognises that rapid and sustained improvement is needed at this school. Governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities; all staff have been checked for their suitability to work with children and trained appropriately to keep pupils safe. They now have an accurate overview of what the school provides. The governing body works closely with the senior leadership team but it has not challenged them over time or held them, including the headteacher, to account for the inconsistency in the school's improvement. Governors are now more familiar with performance data and are aware of the quality of teaching which is linked to teachers' appraisal, and salary progression is based on meeting targets. They check that staff make effective use of pupil premium funding but they have not been rigorous enough in ensuring all pupils have an equal opportunity to reach the standards they are capable of.

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	119667
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	426158

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joseph Killalea
Headteacher	Anne O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2011
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