

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brindle

Bournes Row, Hoghton, Preston, Lancashire, PR5 0DQ

Inspection dates 18–19 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

- Pupils' achievement is inconsistent across key stages and subjects. It is not as strong in Key Stage 2 as in the rest of the school. The more-able pupils do not always make enough progress throughout the school.
- Attainment in writing and mathematics is average and pupils do not apply their skills enough in other subjects.
- Teaching is inconsistent. Some lessons go at too slow a pace and pupils are not challenged enough to work hard throughout the lesson.
- Leaders do not monitor rigorously enough the quality of teaching to ensure that it is always good or better.
- The school's evaluation of its performance is not fully accurate. Priorities and actions are not always sufficiently precise to improve teaching and achievement and increase the speed of school improvement.
- Governors do not check pupils' progress thoroughly enough and ensure staff are made accountable for the progress of pupils in their class.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress in reading is good and attainment is rising to above average. Letters and sounds are taught successfully. Pupils in Year 1 exceeded the expected level in the national reading assessment in 2013.
- Many children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 make good progress. Outdoor provision is amazing.
- Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe. Older pupils are wonderful ambassadors for the school.
- The curriculum has a good focus on enjoyment as well as academic learning. Pupils benefit from a wide range of sporting activities and visits. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully.
- The new headteacher is a good leader. She has quickly identified aspects that need improving and already eradicated some weaker aspects. Staff and parents value the changes and morale is high. The school is in a stronger position to move forward.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in nine lessons.
- Discussions were held with staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Pupils read to the inspector.
- Pupils' work was analysed with a focus on writing and mathematics in Years 2 and 6.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, the school's evaluation of its performance, monitoring of teaching files, tracking information and documents about safeguarding.
- The views of 20 parents were analysed through the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as a review of the school's recent parents' questionnaires. A few parents shared their opinions about the school with the inspector at the start of the school day.
- Seven responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A well-below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher and one teacher are new since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to increase the rate of pupils' progress, particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
 - increasing the pace of some lessons and ensuring that activities sustain pupils' interest and concentration
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and checking that work is always hard enough, especially for the more-able pupils in writing and mathematics
 - giving more attention to closing pupils' gaps in basic writing skills in Key Stage 2
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy and writing skills in all subjects.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - making the monitoring of teaching more rigorous and checking that support is available to remedy any weaknesses
 - ensuring that priorities in the school's improvement plan are very precise and closely linked to raising attainment
 - strengthening the role of the governing body, particularly in relation to checking on pupils' achievement and teachers' success in accelerating progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because progress varies between years and subjects and is not yet rapid enough to ensure all pupils make good progress especially in Key Stage 2. Many pupils make the progress expected of them from their individual starting points but not enough exceed this by the time they leave school especially in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills do not progress as quickly as they could because some activities are not sufficiently well matched to their learning needs and lack challenge. This is especially the case for the more-able pupils and this means the promotion of equal opportunities is not yet fully effective.
- Attainment as pupils leave school is broadly average. Early indications are that results of national tests in 2013 rose to above average but this improvement is not yet consistent. A legacy of underachievement, especially in Years 3 and 4, has left gaps in pupils' skills in Years 5 and 6. Although their progress is accelerating, weaknesses remain in spelling, punctuation and ability to apply numeracy skills to solve problems.
- Pupils start school with attainment that is broadly typical for their age and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers prepare children well for Key Stage 1 especially in the important areas of numeracy and literacy. The promotion of social skills is seen as paramount and the children new to school during the inspection have already settled happily, follow routines and have established friendships.
- Many pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and teacher assessments show that attainment by the end of Year 2 has been above average. This continues to be the case. However, the proportion of pupils reaching above-average levels is closer to average.
- Reading is good throughout the school. Letters and sounds are taught well and pupils in Year 2 use their skills successfully to read new words. Pupils in Year 6 are fluent readers. They enjoy reading and many read higher-level books at home than those offered in school.
- The school has low numbers of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and overall these pupils make expected progress based on their individual need and starting point.
- Each class also has only one or two pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium. This includes the pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. An overall picture reflects average attainment in English and mathematics across the school showing these pupils make the same progress as others.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Despite some good teaching being observed this is not yet consistent and overall teaching requires improvement. As a result the pattern of progress fluctuates and skills acquired in one year are not built upon in the next year.
- Where teaching requires improvement across the school, teachers do not match work to pupils' ability. This is usually done well when pupils settle to their individual tasks but often during the teaching sessions expectations are not high enough and work is too easy for the more-able pupils and occasionally too hard for the lower-ability pupils. Books showed an overuse of worksheets for some activities in mathematics that did not always challenge pupils or allow them to apply their skills.
- The pace of lessons is not always fast enough. Some lessons include too much repetition, as, for example, when older pupils identified questions linked to characters in a film clip. They were motivated by the film and identified some good questions orally but lost interest in repeating the task as a written exercise.
- The introduction to numeracy lessons is often lively and, in Year 6, good subject knowledge was used effectively to draw out from some highly skilled mathematicians their methods of

calculations.

- The new headteacher has introduced a new handwriting policy and improvement is clear in pupils' books. Similar success is less evident in the teaching of spelling and punctuation and these remain needing improvement.
- Teachers encourage reading during set times in school and give close attention to ensuring pupils understand what they are reading and use their skills for research.
- Where teaching is good, teachers add that extra spark to learning. Teaching assistants join in taking on the role of different characters much to the enjoyment of pupils. Behaviour is managed well and pupils ask confidently for help when they are struggling. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and add comments that tell pupils how to improve. Even for early in the school year, classroom displays show many prompts to guide pupils as they learn.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and based on an understanding of learning through play and practical activities. The outside wooded area is new but already being used imaginatively. Children loved collecting conkers and then lining them up and counting them. Singing and dancing add interest to learning new letters and children already recall several new sounds.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. This is a friendly school where all pupils feel valued. Staff show kindness to pupils who in turn show mutual respect for each other.
- Pupils feel safe. They recall the information provided in assemblies, lessons and by visitors and know the importance of avoiding danger. Pupils recognise how to keep healthy and join in energetically with the activities provided through the new primary sports funding to extend participation in dancing and a range of ball games.
- Older pupils show maturity and good leadership skills. They value the opportunities to help the younger pupils in the 'Big Friends and Little Friends' scheme when they are linked to newcomers.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and if it happens it is mainly name calling that they usually sort out themselves. They are aware of different types of bullying and recognise the dangers of cyber-bullying. The school ensure the use of the internet is safe.
- In most lessons pupils work hard and show positive attitudes to their learning. Year 6 pupils show perseverance when tackling challenging tasks but in other years attention wanes too quickly especially when tasks are not fully engaging or they are asked to work independently.
- Attendance is above average and there have been no exclusions over recent years.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspector were a delight. They composed the following quotation, 'The best thing about the school is the staff who help us when we get stuck but also make us happy by investigating and sorting out any worries.'

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The overall quality of leadership and management from leaders and governors requires improvement as changes since the previous inspection have not been rapid enough. However, the new headteacher is securing improvement effectively. Parents appreciate the changes made to the building that have raise morale in the school. The headteacher has implemented changes in several areas including marking and assessment that are already improving teaching and pupils' progress. The school is now improving at a better rate.
- The school's evaluation of its performance is thorough and identifies what the school needs to do to improve. However, overall judgements are too positive because leaders have given too much credence to the test results in 2013. Although improvement is evident and laudable it is not yet secure.
- Effective leadership by the headteacher links the identified next steps to the actions in the

school's improvement plan. These actions are correct for the school but not linked closely enough to the precise weaker aspects identified by subject leaders. Their role has strengthened since the previous inspection and they are very specific about aspects that need attention. For example, that spelling and problem solving are priorities. As yet, this information is not transferred effectively to future action plans.

- Teaching is monitored and the local authority were called in to give support when the headteacher identified some weaker practice, which is now resolved. The headteacher ensures changes, such as to the marking policy, are followed through in practice. However, monitoring is not yet rigorous enough to ensure all teaching is good.
- The headteacher made accuracy of assessment paramount to all changes. Teachers now have a more accurate view of progress. Although this information is not yet used consistently to ensure work matches pupils' ability it is used effectively to identify where support is needed. This is ensuring that previous errors, when pupils in Years 3 and 4 did not make enough progress, are avoided.
- Teachers have targets based on pupils' progress and the headteacher is now questioning teachers more robustly about progress. Staff are becoming more accountable for pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is well balanced and ensures enjoyable learning. In the Early Years Foundation Stage social skills receive due emphasis and this extends throughout the school. Literacy and numeracy skills are not given enough attention across subjects to enable pupils to reinforce their key skills. Music is strong. Year 6 pupils' amazing singing reflected the school's effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Older pupils give great thought to preparing class worship and appreciate the importance of quiet reflection.
- The local authority has been supportive during the headteacher's first year and responded swiftly to offer guidance to raise the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors share the school's strong commitment to improving and identify the effective changes brought about by the headteacher. They are kept informed about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching but do not always check that this information is correct. Governors acknowledge that in the past they did not follow up swiftly enough lack of progress in some years. Now, they give more attention to data to avoid this happening again. Although governors set the headteacher challenging targets they are not as strong in linking teachers' targets to pupils' progress or in checking that salary awards link to performance. Governors manage finances well and know that pupil premium and the new primary sport funding have a positive outcome for pupils. They ensure safeguarding meets 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	119669
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	428874

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Long
Headteacher	Val Plant
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2012
Telephone number	01254 853473
Fax number	01254 851536
Email address	secretary@st-josephs-hoghton.lancs.sch.uk

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