

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Walton Avenue, Penketh, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 2AU

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 a good school because:

- Not enough pupils make good progress or achieve well over time in reading and writing.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have enough time to practise their skills because introductions are overlong.
- Teachers do not always provide work that challenges pupils to do their best.
- The teaching of specific writing skills lacks precision and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write for a purpose in different subjects.
- The pace at which pupils are taught to link letters and sounds is not quick enough.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to read widely in different subjects.
- Pupils lack accuracy in using spelling, punctuation and grammar correctly.
- The checks made on teaching are not rigorous enough in setting specific areas for improvement and in ensuring teachers respond to them successfully.
- The governing body is not sufficiently robust in holding leaders to account for the performance of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have worked well together to raise pupils' achievement and improve teaching in mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils behave well, are eager to learn and their attendance is above average.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe, and they say they feel safe in school at all times.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The care and welfare of pupils is central to the school's work.
- Parents are supportive of the school and appreciative of the way their children are looked after.
- Leaders and governors have the ability to take the school forward.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 11 teachers. Four of these were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, parents, staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. The inspectors listened to groups of pupils read.
- Account was taken of the 60 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in carrying out the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed five questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Melvyn Hemmings, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jean O'Neill	Additional Inspector
Marylin Massey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is larger than the average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average, as is that of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is low. The pupil premium provides additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets 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 the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
 - sharing with staff the best practice evident in the school and in the local family of schools
 - ensuring that teachers always provide work that brings the best out of pupils
 - keeping the introductions to lessons concise so that pupils have sufficient time to practise their skills.
- Raise achievement in reading and writing by:
 - accelerating the pace at which pupils learn to link letters and sounds and providing more opportunity for pupils to read widely in different subjects
 - improving group writing sessions led by adults so they effectively focus on developing specific basic skills, such as the accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to write for a purpose in different subjects.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by:
 - making sure that the quality of teaching is checked more rigorously in order to provide specific areas for improvement and ensuring teachers respond to them successfully
 - ensuring the governing body plays a robust role in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

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

- Children's skill levels on entry to the school are generally as expected for their age. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's attainment is at the national average, with increasing numbers reaching a good level of development.
- From their different starting points, the proportion of pupils making expected progress in reading and writing is close to the national figure and above in mathematics. The proportion exceeding expected progress is above the national figure in mathematics but below in reading and writing. This indicates that not enough pupils are making good progress over time in reading and writing and that achievement requires improvement.
- Attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave Year 6. Pupils say they enjoy reading in school and at home. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to read widely in different subjects to practise and extend their reading skills.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected level at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is average in writing and above average in mathematics. Pupils express their ideas and feelings well by writing creatively in a variety of styles, including poetry and narrative writing. However, they tend to lack accuracy in constructing sentences with correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Leadership has had a positive impact on raising achievement and improving teaching in mathematics. As a result, pupils have secure calculation skills across the four rules of number and can use these confidently to solve number problems in real-life situations.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils because their individual needs are identified early and extra support provided to meet them.
- The most able pupils are not always given work that challenges them sufficiently and this restricts their progress at times, particularly in writing. As a result, their progress requires improvement rather than being good or better.
- Generally, those pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make the same progress as other pupils in school. Year by year the numbers are so small as to make comparison with the attainment of other pupils in school statistically meaningless.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although improvements have been made in teaching, particularly in mathematics, there is not enough of it that is good or better and it is judged to require improvement.
- The rate at which pupils are taught to link letters and sounds (phonics) is not quick enough for them to make rapid progress. The teaching of specific writing skills lacks precision and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write for a purpose in different subjects. The work given to pupils does not always bring the best out of them and this slows their progress at times. In some lessons, pupils do not have enough time to practise their skills because introductions are overlong.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults work well together to provide interesting and practical activities across the areas of learning. They successfully encourage children to make choices for themselves and to take turns and share resources fairly.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, when teaching is good or better, teachers use questioning effectively to find out what pupils know and to extend their understanding in different subjects. They use information about how well pupils have learned to help them plan future lessons. Teachers ensure that pupils are clear about what they are to learn and what they need to do to succeed.
- Such teaching was evident in a literacy lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in which they made good progress using descriptive language to write a poem about an osprey. In this lesson, the teacher used questioning and explanation effectively to extend pupils' understanding of how to

use similes and metaphors to enliven their writing.

- Teaching assistants are deployed well to promote pupils' learning, particularly disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils eligible for the pupil premium.
- Teachers promote spiritual and moral development well by encouraging pupils to think about the wonders of the world around them and by high expectations of their behaviour. Social and cultural development are fostered by pupils being given opportunity to work together and to research and discuss the traditions and beliefs of a variety of cultures.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are proud of their school saying, 'Everybody is friendly and lessons are fun and teachers are helpful and easy to talk to.' Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance and by the way they arrive at school on time.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and supportive of each other in lessons. They behave well and there is a very welcoming and friendly atmosphere throughout the school.
- The views of parents, staff and pupils and a scrutiny of the log of behaviour confirm that behaviour has been good over time. Pupils know about the different types of bullying, such as physical and cyber bullying, and say any such occurrences are very rare. They are confident that any bullying would be dealt with quickly by staff.
- The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' understanding of the dangers associated with the use of roads, railways, water and the internet. As a result, they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils know what to do if approached by a stranger and say that they feel very safe in school at all times.
- Pupils are eager to learn and say they particularly enjoy working together on practical activities. They usually have a good level of concentration but at times this wavers when the pace of lessons is too slow.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility, such as being a member of the school council or older pupils looking after younger ones. They are very keen to be involved in these roles and carry out them out conscientiously.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's leaders are securing improvements in pupils' achievement and in teaching. Nevertheless, leadership and management require improvement because not enough teaching is good or better and insufficient numbers of pupils are making good progress and achieving well in reading and writing. The checks made on teaching lack sufficient rigour and governors do not robustly hold leaders to account for the school's performance.
- The headteacher leads by example and is ambitious for the school. He has a clear view of how successful the school can be.
- The management of staff performance and training of teachers and other adults has successfully brought about improvement in teaching and achievement in mathematics. It has been less effective in raising pupils' achievement in reading and writing. There is a clear link between the performance of teachers and their salary progression.
- Senior leaders carry out lesson observations regularly. However, they lack precision in setting specific areas for improvement and in ensuring teachers respond to them successfully. There is not a structured framework for sharing with staff the best practice evident in the school and in the local family of schools.
- The role of subject leaders has been improved so they have clearer view of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support since the previous inspection. It correctly acknowledges that this needs to be increased in order to drive improvement more quickly.
- The new Primary School Sport funding is being used well to provide training to develop teachers'

expertise in teaching physical education.

- Equality of opportunity and the tackling of discrimination are promoted well. The school treats pupils as unique individuals and their care and well-being is good. Parents are very appreciative of this.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It is enlivened by a variety of extra-curricular activities and visits, including to Manchester Airport and the Liverpool World Museum.
- Improvements made by leaders and governors, particularly in mathematics, show they have sufficient ability to take the school forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body does not robustly hold leaders to account for the school's performance and this limits their impact in driving it forward. Governors do have a sound understanding of how the funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium and the new sports funding is used to bring about improvement. They know how the management of performance is used to improve staff expertise, tackle underperformance and reward good teaching. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met and the budget is managed effectively.

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	111373
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	426244

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	314
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bryan Homan
Headteacher	Alan Saunders
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2008
Telephone number	01925 723340
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