

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Leavale Road, Norton, Stourbridge, DY8 2DT

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Children get a good start to their education. They make good progress in Reception and are prepared well to join Key Stage 1.
- Pupils achieve well at Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above average.
- Pupils achieve well at Key Stage 2. Starting from above average levels, good attainment is sustained and at the end of Year 6, standards are typically above average. They were especially high in 2012.
- All pupils achieve well in mathematics and a good number reach the very highest levels possible.
- Pupils' knowledge and use of grammar, punctuation and spelling are good.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They set tasks that are effective in helping pupils to move on to the next levels of learning quickly.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and to learning. They show pleasure in achieving and confidence in taking the next steps in learning.
- Attendance is above the national average. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are safe.
- Senior leaders carefully check the impact of teachers' work on pupils' achievement and set effective plans for improvement.
- Governors have a good level of involvement in the school. They know its strengths and where improvements are needed. They skilfully prioritise school development matters and contribute well to school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in writing is not as good as in other subjects. Teaching of writing is often too directed and limits pupils' use of imagination.
- Marking does not always give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work. They are not sure how to make their work better.
- Teachers too often direct learning and do not enable pupils to find things out for themselves.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress do not match well enough the evidence in books and where teaching is at its best.
- Opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes and in different subjects are not sufficiently planned across the curriculum.
- There are no formal procedures to set targets to develop the work of teaching assistants.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons. All lessons seen were observed jointly with either the headteacher or assistant headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with governors, members of the senior leadership team, some subject leaders, and pupils. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, and the data it collects on pupils' progress. Documents detailing the school's arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed.
- The inspectors took account of 70 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Dennis Brittain	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- A few pupils speak English as an additional language, but none are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. In this school, the additional funding is for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There is on-site nursery provision. This is run independently of the school and is therefore subject to different inspection arrangements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding and make sure that all teaching is at least good by:
 - extending good-quality marking across the school so the feedback pupils receive on how to improve their work is consistently helpful
 - making sure that the assessments teachers make on pupils' attainment are accurate so that planned work is well targeted to pupils' abilities and builds well on their previous learning
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing so that attainment is above the national average by:
 - enabling pupils to be more imaginative and creative in their writing
 - developing further links between literacy and other subjects so that pupils have greater opportunities to write in a range of different styles and for different purposes.
- Extend the school's procedures to manage the performance of teachers to include teaching assistants in order to broaden their professional development and to increase the school's accountability for their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils typically achieve well and, over time, the school has built a record of generally above-average attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Achievement is good in other subjects such as, science, music, history and geography, and standards are above those typical for pupils' ages.
- Attainment on entry to Reception is at a level of development typical for this age. Children make good progress from their starting points in all areas of learning and, by the end of the Reception Year, the majority of pupils achieve the early learning goals and a minority exceed them.
- Pupils continue to achieve well through Key Stage 1. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is consistently above average. Lesson observations and school records show pupils make good progress from their starting points on entry to Year 1.
- Key Stage 2 national test results have been consistently above average in English and mathematics. In 2012, they were well above average. In 2013, attainment in mathematics remained above average. Pupils also demonstrated above-average standards in their grammar, punctuation and spelling. These results were better than in writing, where the results of teacher assessments were broadly average.
- Despite some variation in attainment, pupils currently in the school are making good overall progress. Standards at Key Stage 1 remain above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in all year groups in Key Stage 2 are above the levels expected for pupils' ages in reading and mathematics. In each year group, pupils exceed expected progress in reading and mathematics.
- Progress in writing has not been as good as in other subjects and standards have only been average, even though pupils have good grammar, punctuation and spelling. This is due to some disruption to pupils' learning in the past, which resulted in them falling behind, and to the teaching of writing being over-directed. Pupils' work across all year groups and ability levels now shows improved progress since the beginning of the current school year.
- Younger pupils read with fluency, expression and accuracy. They are able to recount stories in good detail and make predictions about what they think might happen next. Older pupils are confident readers, reading books chosen independently. They have good background knowledge of a range of different types of books.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making similar progress to other pupils through effective and targeted support from teaching assistants and teachers. Progress is good in mathematics and reading, but as nationally expected in writing. Pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement make better progress than similar pupils nationally.
- More-able pupils have good numeracy knowledge and understanding, and are competent in applying these in calculations. A higher than average proportion of these pupils made good progress, built effectively on already high starting points and achieved the very highest levels available in mathematics. More-able pupils currently produce some well constructed pieces of writing, but this improvement is recent and does not yet show in end of key stage assessments.

- In 2013, pupils funded through the pupil premium made similar and sometimes better progress than others. It was better in reading, the same as others in mathematics but not as good in writing. In Year 6, these pupils were around a term behind their classmates in reading and mathematics, but were nearly two years behind in writing. The gaps in attainment between the two groups were narrower than in 2012.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Lesson observations, records of pupils' progress and the school's checks on teaching show that, since the school's previous inspection, teaching has continued to have a good impact on pupils' learning.
- Teachers have a positive impact on pupils' good and occasionally outstanding behaviour. They maintain strong relationships with pupils, based on respect. They praise achievement when deserved and help sensitively when pupils find difficulty in learning. Consequently, pupils are courteous, strive to improve their work and show respect for others. When teachers encourage them to be independent learners, pupils respond with great enthusiasm and their behaviour is outstanding.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, both when teachers lead groups of children in learning and when they organise child-initiated activities. During child-initiated learning, adults set out a wide range of activities linked to the full range in the development of children's skills and they encourage independence. In taught sessions, they use questioning effectively to involve and engage children.
- Disabled pupils and those identified with special educational needs are well supported and tasks are matched well to their needs. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support individuals and groups of pupils and they engage in discussion with these pupils, giving them confidence to persevere with tasks.
- High expectations and challenge generally result in pupils working at a quick pace. Tasks are mostly planned well to build on pupils' previous learning. Where teaching is at its best, teachers adapt lesson activities in response to the pace at which pupils are learning.
- Pupils make the best progress when teachers encourage them to be independent and take responsibility for their own learning. This was clear in a small number of lessons where teaching was outstanding. Too often, teachers control pupils' learning, dictate the pace at which pupils learn and do not encourage pupils to be independent learners by providing too much guidance; for example, in writing.
- Although most teaching seen during the inspection was good or better, there is still some that requires improvement. Some of the information from the assessments teachers have made on pupils' progress is not consistent with other inspection evidence, such as pupils' books and the quality of teaching and learning seen. This means that work is sometimes set at an inappropriate level for some pupils.
- Sometimes work is marked well and this helps pupils understand how they can improve it. Marking does not always identify the next steps for learning. Pupils say their work is regularly marked but they are not always sure of what they need to do to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils are very keen to get started on their different learning tasks. When given the opportunity, they work independently to very good effect. They work at a good and sometimes rapid pace showing high levels of concentration. They listen to others' views and support each other's learning well.
- Behaviour seen in lessons was never less than good and, in a minority of lessons, it was outstanding. Excellent behaviour was seen when pupils were given opportunities to manage their own work and set their own pace of learning.
- Pupils behave well out of class; for example, at break times. Most parents responding to Parent View believe pupils behave well and all staff agree that behaviour in school is good. There is a history of no fixed-term exclusions over a long period of time.
- Pupils are safe. Pupils know how to stay safe; for example, when using the internet.
- A small minority of the parents responding to Parent View feel that bullying is not dealt with effectively. Pupils have no such concerns. They say that there is no bullying, although they can recall some examples of poor behaviour. Pupils know about the different forms that bullying can take.
- Attendance is consistently above the national average and pupils arrive to school in good time.

The leadership and management

are good

- School leaders have led the school well so that the good overall effectiveness reported at the time of the school's previous inspection has been maintained. High expectations of the school's performance are seen in the school self-evaluation and clear priorities for improvement. The weaknesses in writing have been identified and are being tackled effectively.
- Procedures to set targets for teachers to improve their work are used effectively to help maintain previous performance. Governors complete the headteacher's annual review in line with recommended practice. Teachers' reviews are used to reward effective practice. Although teaching assistants have regular meetings and discussions with the assistant headteacher, they are not yet subject to formal reviews of their performance. Because of this, the school does not have formal records of accountability for their work.
- Leadership in other respects and at other levels is developing. The subject leader for English left the school for a promoted post in recent years. This means that the headteacher has had to take on temporary responsibility for English. A member of staff is currently being prepared to take on this role. In other respects, the training of teachers able to lead subjects and other areas of key responsibility is good.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is led and managed well. Systems have been developed to enable the early identification of pupils who may be in need of support. Achievement is carefully checked to make sure that pupils are making good progress against their individual targets. Staff are knowledgeable about meeting the needs of these pupils.
- Finances are managed well. Pupil premium funding is used appropriately to support the progress of qualifying pupils and to ensure equality of opportunity. The school has made detailed arrangements for spending the primary sports funding to improve and widen opportunities for more pupils to take part in sports activities, to improve their sports skills through engaging

professional sports coaches. In turn, the school envisages this improving teachers' expertise through a whole-school teaching and learning project, which includes them observing, planning, delivering and evaluating specialist-taught physical education lessons.

- Pupils say the curriculum is interesting and they enjoy learning, but they would like more art and physical education. The curriculum supports the development of mathematical and literacy skills well, but there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to improve their writing in subjects other than English. A good range of additional activities engage and motivate pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils have a wide range of cultural experiences. Moral and social development is promoted well through the school's high expectations in this area. Pupils have good opportunities to develop a spiritual dimension through meditation, reflecting on a range of world issues and appreciating their own and others' achievements.
- Through their own risk assessments, the local authority judges this school as one requiring minimal intervention. A consultant is working with the school to improve writing. Support is appropriate and adequate.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors work well with the staff. They help identify issues through regular monitoring and their understanding of performance data. Their support for the headteacher has helped to address difficult teaching issues in the past. They play an important role in helping to identify weaknesses and in planning for improvement.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and gain good first-hand knowledge of the impact of teachers' work. Their professional skills provide them with a good understanding of their commitments. They understand how well the school is doing and know how well pupils' achievement compares with other schools. They challenge the headteacher and leadership team on the school's effectiveness and on development issues.
- Governors set clear targets for the headteacher's and staffs' performance. They ensure that teachers' salary progression is linked to the progress of their pupils.
- Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding.
- They are aware of how different funding such as the pupil premium is allocated, and its impact on the achievement of eligible pupils. They have been fully involved in planning how the primary sports funding will be spent and are aware of the potential benefits.

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	103849
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	427082

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	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charlotte Colesby
Headteacher	Norah Painter
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2008
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