

Saint Joseph's Catholic Primary School, The Borough

Little Dorrit Court, Redcross Way, London, SE1 1NJ

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- This is a caring school, popular with pupils and parents. It keeps its pupils safe and secure, and has a close family ethos. Parents and carers are closely involved in the life of the school.
- Pupils' achievement is good. From starting points that are below typical levels they make good progress and leave school with attainment that is generally above average. The most able are encouraged to aim high, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching is usually fast paced and stimulating. Teachers have high expectations and use questions well.
- Pupils make good progress because leaders and managers carefully check how well each individual is doing and put in place extra support to help those struggling to catch up. As a result, no group falls behind.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They respect one another and get on well together. They have good attitudes to learning. This reflects the school's religious ethos which underpins all that it does and which successfully fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- School leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, are accurate in their view of the school. As a result of their ambition and determination to meet all the recommendations from the previous inspection, the school's performance has improved significantly.
- Leaders, managers and governors work effectively together to ensure that teaching and pupils' achievement are good. They know their school well, and their plans for the future are detailed and cover the right priorities. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Leaders do not always make sure that teachers know what they need to do to achieve consistently outstanding teaching. Occasionally, tasks are not well-enough matched to pupils' abilities.
- In science, pupils are given too many worksheets so that they do not have enough chances to develop their ideas and write up their investigations.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 17 lessons across a range of subjects, many observed jointly with the headteacher or the assistant headteachers.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at samples of their work.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers with responsibilities for specific subjects, a representative of the local authority, and groups of pupils. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the vice chair and six other members. Inspectors took account of the views of staff in nine questionnaires.
- There were 16 responses to Parent View, the online survey of the views of parents and carers. Inspectors considered these, and also spoke to a number of parents and carers during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including: the school's own views of how well it is doing; its plans for the future; information on pupils' attainment and progress; safeguarding information; records relating to behaviour and safety; and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Natalia Power, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Raminder Arora

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is a little smaller in size than the average primary school.
- Around two pupils in five are eligible for the pupil premium. This proportion is higher than average. The pupil premium provides schools with additional funding for children looked after by the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and for those with a parent or carer in the armed services. At St Joseph's nearly all of the pupils who qualify for the pupil premium do so through eligibility for free school meals.
- Around nine out of 10 pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and this proportion is much higher than the average. Three quarters of pupils speak English as an additional language, and this proportion is also much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is lower than average, but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by making clear to teachers, what they need to do to achieve consistently outstanding teaching and to ensure that work is always hard enough for them.
- Give pupils fewer worksheets to complete in science and make sure that they write up the results of their research and investigations more fully.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress and no group falls behind. This shows how pupils benefit from the school's commitment to equality for all. They leave school with results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 which are typically somewhat above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes, arriving with skills and aptitudes which vary but are generally below the levels typical for their age. As a result of the good care and close attention they receive from all the adults, they make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 continue to receive good teaching overall, and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most able are encouraged to do as well as they can. For example, in 2013 almost a fifth of pupils gained Level 6 in mathematics, a level normally reached by teenagers.
- Pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and those who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to others because their needs are identified early and effective support is given.
- The school is responsive in providing additional support for disabled pupils and those who have a range of special educational needs, both within the classroom and in small withdrawal groups. As a result, these pupils make similar progress to the others in the school.
- Pupils do well in reading, because the school works in close partnership with parents and carers to foster a love of reading. Children read at home as well as at school, and this makes a valuable contribution to their learning. As a result the proportion of pupils in Year 1 that reached the required standard in the 2013 check of their reading skills was above average, and by Year 6 pupils consistently do better than average in the national reading tests.
- The school has a positive effect on the learning of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium. School leaders and governors check the progress of these pupils and keep a close eye on how well the additional support for them is used. As a result, they make similar progress to all others in the school in reading, writing and mathematics, and there is no appreciable gap between their attainment and that of the others.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, and is now good. A scrutiny of pupils' work over time confirms that they make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers expect a good deal from the pupils, and they respond by doing their best work. Lessons are well planned. Questioning is brisk, and this keeps pupils alert and interested.
- The best teaching is varied and stimulating. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson based on Alfred Noyes's poem, 'The Highwayman', pupils were asked to elaborate the line 'the wind was a torrent of darkness' by inserting their own clauses. The teacher challenged them to aim high and use poetic and descriptive language, and pupils rose to the challenge, writing, for instance, that the wind was 'feared'.
- Most teaching takes good account of pupils' varied capabilities, and teachers adapt the tasks accordingly. For example, in one stimulating Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils were busily engaged in learning subtraction using a variety of methods based on their abilities, some using plastic blocks, others rolling dice to subtract one number from another.
- This is not the case in every instance, however, and inspectors saw occasional examples where the work set was too easy for the most able pupils, or too difficult for the less able.
- Teaching and activities in the Nursery and Reception classes are generally stimulating, and the children enjoy learning. In one Nursery class, for example, based on their reading of 'Mrs

Honey's Hat', the children were asked to decorate a large drawing of a hat. The task gave them the chance to see bubbles being blown, discuss their shape, listen to the sound that 'bubbles' begins with, and attempt to write the letter 'b' on the hat. This gave the children a good understanding of sounds and letters, and developed their language and thinking skills well.

- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils, particularly those who have a range of additional needs, helping them individually and in small groups. This helps pupils who are learning English and those who struggle with their work to make similar progress to others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning and told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and like their teachers. One commented, 'We get extra help if we need it', and the others agreed.
- Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They respond well to adults, and are considerate to one another. Even the youngest children in the Reception class look smart in their uniform, and have good table manners when they eat lunch in the dining hall.
- In the playground, pupils are ready to take turns, and they are well supervised. It was lovely to see them playing with hoops with consideration for the safety of others. Pupils told inspectors that the good behaviour seen in and around the school was typical.
- Occasionally, when the tasks set are too easy or too difficult, pupils sometimes become a little restless, and this is why behaviour is good rather than outstanding.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception classes have an attractive outdoor play area, with opportunities for them to learn language and number skills outdoors, as well as physical skills.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well, and as a result pupils respect one another's heritages and get on very well together. The school is inclusive, and school leaders ensure that there is no discrimination. The school promotes a strong community ethos and, as a result of close links between school and home, pupils feel secure.
- Pupils feel safe at the school. One commented, 'Teachers take care of you, and we are safe.' They understand how to keep themselves safe. They told inspectors that there was no bullying such as racist or cyber bullying, but that sometimes there was a little name-calling. However, they know whom to turn to if they have any worries and are confident that these will be quickly dealt with.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above-average attendance.
- All parents and carers who responded to Parent View or who spoke to inspectors agreed that their children are safe and well looked after at the school. One parent or carer who spoke to inspectors praised the school highly, not only for identifying her child's special educational needs, but for providing emotional and practical support so that, as she commented, 'At heart I feel at peace.'

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good, because school leaders have worked effectively with governors to improve the quality of the teaching and to raise pupils' achievement, so that both are now good.
- Leaders and governors have made a considerable difference to pupils' achievement in mathematics, which was a key area for improvement in the previous inspection. Due to their efforts, attainment in mathematics has risen, so that in 2013 pupils were half a year ahead of the national average in the Year 6 tests.
- Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, understand the school well and know what they

need to do to continue its improvement. Their plans are robust and cover the right priorities.

- Leaders check pupils' progress carefully, making sure that all groups make similar progress, including the most able, those with a range of additional needs and those eligible for support from the pupil premium. Leaders make sure that both teachers and teaching assistants understand the information about pupils' progress, and use it effectively.
- Parents and carers told inspectors of good communications between school and home. They feel well informed, and several described the school as a close-knit community. The partnership between school and home makes a valuable contribution to pupils' good learning.
- The school has effective procedures for managing staff performance and linking good teaching to movement up the pay scale, and this has had a good impact on improving the overall quality of teaching.
- However, teaching is not yet outstanding, and this is why leadership is not graded as outstanding. School leaders do not always make sufficiently clear to teachers how they can improve their performance. Their comments following lesson observations sometimes place too much emphasis on what went well, and too little on what teachers should do to secure the best learning.
- The headteacher is ably supported by the local authority, which is giving the school helpful assistance in its journey of improvement.
- The school keeps pupils safe and makes sure that those who work with them have been properly checked.
- The curriculum has a good focus on reading, writing and mathematics and this prepares pupils well for the next stage of schooling. Pupils benefit from good chances to write at length on a range of history and geography topics. However, throughout the school, science is too much based on worksheets which hold pupils back from writing about science topics fluently enough.
- Outside the classroom, pupils have many exciting opportunities to develop their musical, artistic and sporting skills. One pupil told inspectors that physical education was a popular subject because 'it keeps you fit and healthy'. Though the school has not yet received its additional sports funding, plans are in hand to work in collaboration with a secondary academy to introduce new sports such as basketball and to widen participation in sport. The school has plans to measure the impact of this work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors play an active part in the life of the school and know its strengths and areas for development. Minutes of meetings of the governing body show that governors are ready to ask searching questions, and hold the school to account. Governors visit lessons to assure themselves of the quality of the teaching. They are well informed about how well the school performs in comparison to other schools.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the link between teachers' pay and the progress that pupils are making. This ensures good value for money. They know what the school is doing to tackle underperformance.
 - Governors keep a firm hand on the school's budget. They carefully check the uses to which pupil premium funding is put, making sure that it benefits those for whom it is intended. They moved quickly in asking the physical education manager how the additional primary sports funding would be used, and approved the plans to establish links with the secondary academy.
 - Governors are well trained and effectively carry out their statutory duties, including safeguarding and ensuring equality of opportunity.

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	100834
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	425514

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Hurley
Headteacher	Sue Barber
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2011
Telephone number	020 7407 2642
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Email address	office@st-josephs-borough.southwark.sch.uk

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