

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Babworth Road, Retford, DN22 7BP

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2014

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.

- Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress to attain standards that are broadly in line with national averages.
- Teaching is good overall. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, it is sometimes outstanding.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive high-quality support.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, a love of reading and enjoy lessons.
- Attendance is above average.
- Teachers plan a range of activities around interesting topics. They use questioning very well to check pupils' understanding as lessons progress.
- Teaching assistants are very skilled at teaching and supporting pupils' learning.
- The teaching offers pupils many exciting opportunities to see the links between subjects. Pupils particularly enjoy physical education, history, drama and art.
- The school offers excellent care and support and provides extremely well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They care very well for one another and say they feel very safe.
- The headteacher and governing body have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. As a result, they have driven improvements in teaching and pupils' progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are given too few chances to write at length in English and other subjects.
- Teachers do not give pupils the opportunity to apply their problem-solving skills to real-life situations.
- Targets to help increase pupils' progress in the school development plan and in the management of teachers' performance are not specific enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed nine teachers and visited 16 lessons or part lessons. Three lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the English and mathematics subject leaders, pupils and governors. The lead inspector had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed pupils' work, looked in their exercise books and listened to them read.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, information on pupils' progress, and documents regarding safeguarding and key reports and policies.
- The inspector took account of the 57 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, letters from parents, and analysed 20 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Andrew Stafford, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nicky Penny

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding which, in this school, is provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher was appointed in November 2013. Two newly qualified teachers were appointed in September 2013 and one supply teacher joined the school in December 2013 to cover temporarily for a teacher on maternity leave.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order to raise standards and the rates of pupils' progress further, by:
 - offering pupils more opportunities to write imaginatively and at length in English and other subjects
 - ensuring that teachers set work in mathematics that gives pupils the opportunity to apply their skills in problem-solving activities and to real-life situations
 - including specific expectations for the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in the school improvement plan and the management of teachers' performance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The abilities of different year groups vary in the school. Most children currently in the Early Years Foundation Stage and many in Key Stages 1 and 2 started school with skills and abilities that were below those typically expected for their age.
- Good teaching, including some excellent teaching of reading, helps pupils to make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, most children have a good level of development when they join Year 1.
- Further good teaching in Key Stage 1 helps pupils to make good progress from their low starting points on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2013 were in line with the nationally expected levels in reading, writing, mathematics and English grammar. More pupils made better than the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their below-average starting points at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to attain above-average standards. They have made good progress from their below-average starting points at the end of Year 2. This is a result of good teaching in Key Stage 2 and occasionally outstanding teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6.
- In 2012 and 2013, the more-able pupils achieved well because the school identified their skills and abilities early and focused effectively on helping them to build on these. As part of the school's drive to raise aspirations and make it even more effective, work for the more-able pupils currently in Year 6 is targeted to help them attain well above-average standards.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2013 who were eligible for the pupil premium funding to compare their attainment with that of their classmates without the risk of identifying individual pupils. Pupils currently in the school who are eligible for the pupil premium make similar good progress as other pupils in the school in English and mathematics. The school's records show that use of the funding to pay for teaching eligible pupils in small groups has helped to narrow the gap between those pupils and other pupils in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is as a result of effective leadership and management by the special educational needs leader, as well as the good teaching and support that these pupils receive from teachers and teaching assistants. Well-targeted support and highly skilled teaching for pupils who have complex needs ensures that they make good progress in lessons in English and mathematics.
- The school is very clearly focused on identifying any pupils who are at risk of falling behind and concentrates on ensuring that all pupils make at least good progress. This clearly shows the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.
- Inspection evidence shows that pupils' progress in reading is good. There is a consistent focus on reading across the school. Pupils of all ages speak enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy when reading in school and at home.

- In the 2012 and 2013 phonics screening check, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the expected level was just above the national average. The teaching of how letters are linked to sounds is good. As a result, almost all pupils have a clear understanding of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) and understand how this helps them to read unfamiliar words.
- In English, progress in writing has not been as rapid as progress in reading. The school has correctly identified this and improving writing is a focus this year for the whole school. The impact of this focus is evident in pupils' writing books, although there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and improve through extended writing across different subjects.
- In 2013, an above-average proportion of pupils made better than expected progress in mathematics. This is because of the provision of more resources for pupils to acquire different strategies for acquiring mathematical skills. However, pupils have too few opportunities to apply their mathematical skills beyond the classroom, or encounter problems that have more than one answer. This hinders their progress and restricts their chances of reaching the higher National Curriculum levels.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good overall, with some outstanding teaching of reading in the classes for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and for writing in Year 6. Teachers plan interesting activities and question pupils well in both whole-class and small-group settings. They encourage pupils to talk through ideas, plan carefully and work creatively together. Teachers are very skilful at explaining what pupils are to learn and leading them through ways to do tasks.
- For example, the teacher in Year 6 used pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of the book they were reading as a stimulus for writing. She allowed pupils time to talk together and gather ideas for their writing; she made it absolutely clear to pupils what skills they had to develop and how they would know they had been successful. She offered pupils time to concentrate on their writing and checked their progress as the learning progressed.
- However, progress is good in writing rather than outstanding because not all teachers offer pupils opportunities to write imaginatively or at length in English or in other subjects.
- Mathematics is taught well. In a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 1, for example, the teacher used her good subject knowledge, focused questioning and clear explanations, so that pupils understood different ways to do multiplication. Well-planned games engaged pupils' interest and they made good progress. The more-able pupils were challenged to extend their understanding of more complex arrays of numbers and to multiply larger numbers.
- Progress is good in mathematics rather than outstanding because, in some lessons, teachers spend too much time reinforcing calculation skills rather than teaching pupils how to apply these skills to real-life situations. There are few opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving activities.
- Teachers use marking and target-setting well. They make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work and move on to the next level in their learning. The requirement that all pupils extend their learning by completing regular homework makes a very significant contribution to their rapid progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say that behaviour is good in their lessons and around school. Good behaviour was evident in lessons, with pupils keen to do their best. Pupils are very proud of their school and work hard at all times, supporting one another in their learning.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and in the dining hall. Older pupils look after younger children and help pupils play safely and enjoyably together. Pupils show great respect for one another and are very polite to adults. School records show that this is typical of behaviour over time. There have been no exclusions. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils show maturity and enjoy taking on responsibilities. They develop social skills through the many opportunities to learn together, in the sports activities they do with pupils from other schools and in the school clubs. The school council helps to draw up the school's core values. It puts forward ideas to improve the playground markings for play purposes and suggests new equipment for individual and group games. Pupils' involvement in an enterprise project shows that they use teamwork to tackle corporate aims.
- The small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave well are well managed by the school and their behaviour has improved rapidly.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are certain that they are safe and happy in school and there are strong procedures to ensure that this is indeed the case, with all adults offering highly effective and sensitive care to pupils. Pupils know they can turn to adults for help and be certain that any problem will be dealt with effectively.
- As a result, pupils feel safe. They are well aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and racism. They say that there is no bullying. Occasionally, friends fall out but pupils say they are able to solve problems between themselves or by asking school 'Happy Helpers' to help them. A small proportion of parents express some concerns about bullying and the school has responded quickly and effectively through teaching pupils in assemblies and lessons to deal with disputes by responding with tolerance.

The leadership and management are good

- The enthusiastic headteacher has high expectations and aspirations for all staff and pupils. As a result, there is a welcoming, calm, safe and purposeful environment in the school which enables teachers and pupils to flourish and give of their best.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's overall effectiveness, and strengths and weaknesses are clearly identified. Effective action is taken to drive school improvement. This is seen, for example, in the school's work this year to make sure that pupils make more-rapid progress in writing.
- The headteacher has delegated responsibilities to staff, who willingly accept responsibility and accountability for areas of learning. He ensures that they have the training and support to develop leadership skills. As a result, leadership across the school is good. Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements in the progress made by the more-able pupils and a higher proportion of teaching is good and outstanding.
- The headteacher regularly checks the quality of teaching; he clearly understands what constitutes good teaching and judges it accurately. He is clear in his feedback to teachers and checks that points for improvement are followed up closely.

- The headteacher and other teachers have expertise in using data to measure and evaluate pupils' progress. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate areas for development and there are clear procedures to check its impact regularly and systematically. However, it lacks specific targets for the proportion of pupils who should make better than expected progress.
- All teachers, including those who are newly qualified, know that they will be rewarded only when the targets in their performance management have been met. However, these targets are not yet clearly linked to the proportion of pupils that make better than expected progress.
- Funding to support the learning of those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium has been used to develop their basic skills, to provide extra teachers' hours and to purchase appropriate resources. Funds are also used to offer pupils cultural opportunities through visits and extra-curricular activities. As a result, eligible pupils make the same good progress as other pupils in the school.
- The primary school sports funding has been used to develop competitive sports and to pay for coaches to develop teachers' expertise in teaching a wider range of physical and sporting activities. The school has introduced new sports, such as dance, fencing and gymnastics, through the use of specialist coaches from the community and teachers from a local academy.
- Physical education is well taught by coaches and teachers. Pupils say they enjoy these lessons, especially swimming, and teachers welcome the development of their skills alongside the coaches. These are contributing well to pupils' physical development and well-being.
- While the school focuses on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, it also provides many opportunities for pupils to see the links between subjects. These build on pupils' enjoyment of history, art, drama and religious education, and contribute strongly to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Leaders acknowledge that the next challenge is to increase opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical and writing skills through their work across different subjects.
- The school welcomes the support and advice it receives from the local authority, which now offers a light level of support. The skills and expertise of the headteacher and some other senior staff are used in the two 'families' of local schools to support other colleagues through sharing best practice, and as part of the training of new teachers from local universities. Senior staff deliver training to improve the quality of teaching for colleagues across the locality. They also moderate standards across the local authority by checking the accuracy of teachers' assessments of children's work in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in teacher-assessed writing for the national tests at the end of Year 6.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body offers strong support and increasing challenge to the school and has improved its effectiveness through training and applying the professional skills of its members. It has a very clear overview of pupils' attainment and progress. Governors regularly review their own effectiveness to ensure that they maximise their impact on improving pupils' achievement. The budget is extremely well managed. Governors ensure that the school fulfils all its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. All staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. Governors receive clear information about how the pupil premium funding and the new primary school sports funding are allocated, and they are knowledgeable about their impact. Governors have clear systems to check the achievement of pupils, the quality of teaching and the curriculum. They monitor the school improvement plan and arrangements to improve teachers' performance, although targets to raise attainment and increase pupils' progress are not yet specific enough.

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	122813
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	431237

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	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marie Stringfellow
Headteacher	Richard Hilton
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2009
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