

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Mountain View, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0DG

Inspection dates 3–4 July 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.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start. The good progress they make continues through the school for different groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The varied and carefully chosen support put in place for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is effective helping them to make good progress.
- Teachers know pupils well and as a result of good teaching and an exciting range of subjects and topics, pupils' achievement is good.
- Relationships in school between pupils and staff are very good. Pupils do well because the school takes very good care of them as individuals.
- Pupils, parents and school staff all agree that the school is a safe place in which to learn.
- Pupils are polite courteous and respectful. Their behaviour is good and this ensures their attention in lessons and has a positive effect on their achievement.
- The curriculum offers pupils a wide range of exciting activities and as a result, pupils enjoy their learning.
- Attendance is average. The school works closely with parents to improve attendance.
- The strong team spirit that pervades the school means that everyone is involved in improving the school.
- The headteacher and governors evaluate the school's performance accurately and use their findings to ensure further improvements happen. They have improved teaching and as a result, the quality of pupils' writing has also improved.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the most able, are not always high enough. The marking of pupils' work does not always help pupils to know what they have to learn next.
- Teachers do not have opportunities to see outstanding teaching.
- The profile of mathematics is not strong enough throughout the school. There are very few examples of pupils' mathematical work on display. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 have few opportunities to explore mathematics outdoors.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills in different subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed three teachers and one teaching assistants whilst visiting nine lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, pupils, parents, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed break time and talked regularly with pupils as they moved around school.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- A range of the school's documentation was observed including plans for improvement, safeguarding arrangements, a record of the school's observation of teaching and systems for tracking pupils' progress.
- The inspector took account of responses to the school's most recent questionnaire for parents alongside 17 responses from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and letters from parents.
- The inspector analysed nine questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Sue Sharkey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is considerably smaller than the average sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- In this very small school, the government's current floor standards do not apply.
- The school has an above average proportion of pupils who enter and leave the school at other than the usual times.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes: Reception with Year 1; Year 2 with Years 3 and 4; and Year 5 with Year 6. The number in each year group is sometimes less than six.
- A Key Stage 2 teacher joined the school in September 2013.
- The school has achieved the Bronze Eco School and Healthy School status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers always have high expectations of what individual pupils can achieve including the most able
 - ensuring marking always informs pupils about what they have to learn next and pupils are always given enough time to think about teachers' comments and are given the opportunity to respond
 - ensuring that teachers have opportunities to observe outstanding teaching.
- Improve achievement in mathematics even further by:
 - raising the profile of mathematics throughout the school, for example, through displays of pupils' work to show how pupils learn mathematics
 - ensuring that Reception Year children and Year 1 pupils have plenty of opportunities to explore mathematics outdoors
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use the skills they learn in mathematics lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children join the school in the Early Years Foundation stage, their individual skills can vary from year to year but are usually in line with that typical for their age. However, their communication and language, reading and writing skills can more often be below those typical. Children flourish in their Reception Year where they learn to share, follow routines and quickly show politeness and good manners.
- Children enjoy using the outdoor area. A group of boys took advantage of the sloped path where they chatted eagerly about their different vehicles before racing them down the path. Other children practise writing words on the blackboard. However, there are not many opportunities for pupils to explore numbers and shapes outdoors.
- The school now promotes equal opportunities effectively. As a result, through a wide range of activities children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from their starting points. This good progress continues through Key Stages 1 and 2 for all groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language. All parents who responded to Parent View agreed with this.
- Over the last two years, standards at the end of Year 2 have been rising so that they are now average in reading, writing and mathematics. The very small numbers of pupils in year groups mean that standards at the end of Year 6 vary from year to year. For example, in the 2013 national tests, pupils' attainment in reading and writing was above average, but in mathematics, it was below average, having been above average in 2012. Reliable predictions for 2014 indicate that Year 6 pupils' attainment in mathematics will have improved to above average. Inspection evidence confirms this confidence.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2013, 100% of pupils achieved the progress expected of them in reading and writing. Although pupils usually make good progress in mathematics, they do not have sufficient opportunities to practise and apply the skills they learn in mathematics lessons in a range of contexts.
- Over time, the most able pupils make good progress. In the 2012 national tests, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics was well above the national average and this was the same for reading in 2013. The proportion reaching Level 5 in writing was average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show that the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 varies from year to year but in 2014, the proportion was above average in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals are supported well, where necessary, to make good progress. Given the very small numbers of these pupils in each year group, any comparison between their attainment in English and mathematics and that of other pupils in the school would be statistically unreliable.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is closely monitored. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers supporting these pupils to ensure that they make the same good progress as other pupils in the school. Over recent years, the proportion of pupils entering and leaving the school other than at the usual times has been high. Due to good support and care provided for new arrivals, these pupils settle quickly into the school and make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy reading. In the Early Year Foundation Stage, children are very familiar with books, reading in school and at home. Due to the very small number of pupils taking the Year 1 phonic screening check year on year, no meaningful comparison can be made between their performance and that of Year 1 pupils nationally. As pupils continue through the school, they maintain their enjoyment of reading, both for pleasure and information and learn to use punctuation successfully to help put expression in their voices.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good quality of teaching has helped to maintain pupils' good achievement over time. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils' good social skills and positive attitudes to learning have been promoted well. As a result, relationships all round are very good. All of this contributes well to pupils' good progress in school.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and persevere. During a Years 5 and 6 activity, pupils were developing their skills in using a pair of compasses to draw circles. Some pupils found this challenging, trying different ways to hold the compass and draw a perfect circle. They concentrated well, whilst rising to the challenge before moving onto using their circles to make different angles and measure these accurately with a protractor.
- Classrooms are bright and lively, displaying pupils' work effectively, especially their writing and art. However, examples of pupils' work in mathematics are not as prevalent or as well celebrated throughout the school.
- Although teaching is good over time, the marking of pupils' work does not always provide pupils with a clear idea of how to improve their work. Even when marking does do this, pupils are not always given sufficient time or the opportunity to reflect or act on this guidance.
- Teachers work well with teaching assistants who provide effective support for pupils. This support contributes well to pupils' effective learning, is sensitive and caring and enables all pupils to be integrated fully.
- The work planned for pupils ensures that there is a good range of activities, but the expectations of what they can achieve, especially the most able, are not always high enough and so pupils do not always learn as much as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils feel well looked after in school by all the adults around them. They talk enthusiastically about the care they receive and their relationship with adults and with each other, indicating a high level of social and moral development.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school. Pupils say bullying is rare, but that they can turn to any adult in school for immediate help if needed. Pupils have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying and understand the dangers of misusing the internet.
- Pupils are confident, demonstrate good attitudes to learning and are keen to talk about their experiences in school. They are proud to be a member of the school, keeping the school tidy, caring for its environment, as well as caring for each other. Older pupils talk about helping to look after younger children at break times and other occasions.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils, together with their parents, feel strongly that the school is a safe place where everyone is valued. Relationships are harmonious so that playtimes and lunchtimes are pleasant, relaxed occasions.
- Pupils willingly take on responsibilities in the school. For example, members of the school council organise fund raising events for charity, as well as seeking views from all other pupils as to how they would like the school to improve. The eco-group checks to ensure that any tidying or weeding of the school grounds are needed, or if new plants are required.
- Attendance is average. The headteacher works closely with parents to reinforce the importance of their children attending school regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by the headteacher who works very closely with all staff as well as the Chair of the Governing Body. She is ambitious and committed to the school's ongoing development.
- The headteacher knows the school well, and her judgements of how well the school is doing are

accurate. She keeps a close eye on the progress pupils make and the quality of teaching. As well as leading teaching effectively, the headteacher also has a teaching commitment. Teachers work closely together, however, they do not get have many opportunities to experience outstanding teaching.

- The school has adopted a robust system for managing the performance of teachers. Teachers' pay is clearly linked to how effectively they enable pupils to learn. Staff training is suitably linked to targets set for teachers, as well as the current priorities for improving the school. As a result, the standard pupils' writing is now improving successfully throughout the school.
- The headteacher as mathematics subject leader, together with the subject leader for English, are focused on continually improving pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvements over recent years show that the school continues to have good capacity to improve.
- The school works closely with parents, who are very supportive of the school. Parents who were spoken with during the inspection said that they were very pleased with the school and all it offers their children, especially enabling them to achieve and behave well.
- The local authority has a good relationship with the school, offering light touch support and has recently worked with the headteacher carrying out lessons observations.
- The curriculum engages pupils well and provides them with exciting activities. It is enriched by a wealth of educational visits to interesting places in the local area. For example, during the inspection Years 5 and 6 pupils were studying a local river with a planned visit to look at river features. Earlier in the summer term, pupils looked at Aztecs symbols and stories using these to design felt panels for a wall hanging. Pupils have many opportunities to join in with musical or sporting activities, often with other local schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is knowledgeable about, supports and checks the school's work closely. Governors play a key role in the 'school team', visiting the school regularly but are aware that they do not often see teaching and learning in classrooms. However, through working closely with the headteacher, governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and work closely with her to reward teachers for their performance. Governors keep a close eye on the school's budget and are fully aware of the impact that pupil premium funding has on pupils' progress. Their understanding of the school's performance data on pupils' achievement gives them an appropriate awareness of pupils' progress. The use of the primary school sport fund is having a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of sport. Governors attend training regularly to ensure they are up-to-date. Following the audit of governors' skills, the governing body is able to ensure that governors' skills are used effectively to challenge and support the school. The governing body ensures requirements for safeguarding are met.

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	112335
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	443876

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	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patty Williams
Headteacher	Teresa Readman
Date of previous school inspection	24 February 2010
Telephone number	01900 829859
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