

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Scratton Road, Stanford-le-Hope, SS17 0PA

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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 good because

- Many changes in staff this year have limited the ability of the few leaders to push forward improvements. This means not every area identified as needing attention at the last inspection has been improved.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the different year groups. As a result pupils are not learning as well as they could and so do not make rapid progress.
- Teachers do not always set work that is at the right level for pupils. The most able sometimes find it too easy.
- Teachers can miss those who are struggling or finding the work too easy because they do not always check carefully what pupils understand.
- Arrangements to ensure the good progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are not effective enough. Teachers do not take sufficient account of their specific needs in lessons. Support staff are not always properly briefed by teachers about what these pupils should be learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Governors are doing a better job. They have done as much as they can to make sure leaders have the support needed to improve the school.
- Leaders have improved some things, and have shown they are capable of improving the school.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is now good. Teaching in Reception has improved considerably and is now good across both classes.
- The school is a safe and happy environment in which pupils behave well and are keen to learn. Attendance is consistently much higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, three of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, members of the governing body including the Chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 94 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also took account of the 31 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors listened to the reading of a sample of pupils in Year 2.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lisa Fraser	Additional Inspector
John Viner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is above average in size. It has six mixed-age classes out of nine in total.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional government funding which, in this school, supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average and falling. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school has experienced considerable staff changes since its last inspection. The headteacher took up the post on a full-time basis at the start of the week of the inspection. He had previously been working in the school for three days each week since the start of term. The deputy headteacher had led the school in an acting capacity for the previous year. Six newly qualified teachers have started at the school since September 2013.
- The governing body has undergone several recent changes of personnel including the appointment of a new chair.
- 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 teaching by ensuring that:
 - the more able pupils are always given work that challenges and makes them think
 - teachers check the pupils' understanding of the work they are doing more carefully and adapt their teaching accordingly.
- Strengthen leadership and management by training more staff to take on the leadership of subject areas.
- Increase the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs by:
 - ensuring that teachers set them the right work and fully brief support staff on what learning is intended
 - checking the impact of support programmes and altering them where needed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress has previously been stronger at Key Stage 2 than in other year groups. However, teacher changes mean that pupils in Key Stage 2 are now only making consistently good progress in Year 6. Progress also requires improvement in Key Stage 1.
- The most able pupils do not achieve consistently well because teachers do not always ensure work is hard enough for them.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs requires improvement. Progress is much better during the individual and small group programmes of support taking place outside the classroom than in normal lessons.
- Year 6 test results were above average in mathematics in 2013 and fell to average in reading and writing. Current attainment is higher in reading and there are signs that the attention paid to writing is starting to show improvements, although not consistently across the school.
- Pupils' progress in phonics is now good and their attainment is rising rapidly, following below average results in the Year 1 phonics check in 2013. Pupils become very secure in their understanding and almost all apply their phonic skills when they come across unfamiliar words.
- Extra funding is used well to increase the progress of pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium. It is spent on individual and small group work and additional lessons in English and mathematics for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress. There was no difference in Year 6 test results in 2013 in mathematics between these pupils and others in the class. The gap was only one term in reading and writing.
- Children enter Reception with skills typical for their age. Their progress has improved and is now good. The children's attainment is above average by the time they enter Year 1. Children now have similarly productive experiences in both classes, particularly in the outdoor area. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teachers do not always set work that is sufficiently adapted to the needs of pupils. This holds back the learning of the most able pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, in particular.
- In some lessons, the most able pupils sit listening to work they already understand and then complete the same tasks as others, which they find too easy. Teachers mostly check the pupils' learning but not all question carefully to be sure what they have understood so they can adapt their teaching if necessary.
- The learning of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs requires improvement. This is because teachers do not plan clearly how they will adapt their lessons to meet their particular needs. This means the work these pupils undertake can be inappropriate or support staff not briefed sufficiently on how to support their learning.
- Where learning is at its most effective, pupils become quickly immersed in what they are being

taught. For example, in a literacy lesson for Year 5 and 6 pupils during the inspection pupils were greatly motivated by writing a letter to persuade a celebrity chef to visit the school. The teacher's questioning drew out ideas, checked their understanding and encouraged them to reflect on their responses. Much learning took place through animated discussion stimulated by the teacher and teaching assistant, and as a result of the skilful way the lesson was structured pupils confidently volunteered their own ideas.

- Children in Reception made rapid progress in their understanding of a new sound in a phonics lesson observed during the inspection. The children worked with great interest, behaved impeccably and strove hard to succeed. This was because of a clear structure, high expectations and close attention to the responses of individuals.
- Teaching in Reception is strong and much improved. Adults use the outdoor area skilfully to promote children's development across each of the areas of learning. Children are excited and keen to play and learn. During the inspection, all adults provided effective support through the quality of their interactions with the children; this kept them focused and led their learning forward. Children are prepared well for moving into Year 1 because of the firm foundations that are laid in key skills and also because teachers adapt the degree of formal structure that lessons have according to the development of the children.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils get on well with each other and their teachers. They respond quickly to instructions and their conduct around the school, at lunchtime and in the playground is also good. They are proud of the school, and work hard to keep it tidy and litter-free. Parents agree that behaviour is good, and school records confirm it.
- In the vast majority of lessons, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and work hard. They learn well from and with each other when discussing ideas, working on tasks or evaluating each other's work constructively. Where teaching is less challenging or interesting, some pupils lose concentration, but there is no disruption. Pupils' books show that they try to present their work well and are proud of what they do.
- Pupils value the confidence shown in them by the school when giving them responsibilities to undertake. Year 5 pupils are enthusiastic about working at lunchtime with Key Stage 1 pupils when organising games, reading them stories and eating lunch together. The pupils' attendance is above average because they value and enjoy what the school offers them.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding procedures are regularly reviewed and rigorously implemented. Pupils say they feel safe in school, which is a view shared by their parents. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of most types of bullying. They say that some bullying has taken place in the past but teachers have acted quickly to sort things out.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school has been working under considerably reduced leadership capacity over the last year. This has meant the acting headteacher and the few subject leaders have been stretched to push through action to improve all areas of weakness identified at the last inspection.
- Teachers have not been held sufficiently to account for ensuring disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are catered for effectively in lessons. However, governors have been proactive in plugging the gap with temporary external support from an experienced special

needs leader. Pupils with special educational needs are now being supported through individually designed programmes, but their impact has not yet been evaluated.

- The acting headteacher and the remaining subject leaders are now monitoring teaching more closely by looking carefully at the impact on learning and progress. This is linked to further training and targets for each teacher set firmly against progress in their classes. The large proportion of new teachers taking classes this year has meant resources for improving teaching have been spread thinly. However, several of these teachers are now moving towards being securely good.
- Leaders are showing that they are capable of improving the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and development planning focused well. Despite the significant staffing changes the school has managed to tackle successfully some key areas identified as needing improvement at the last inspection. This includes the teaching of phonics.
- The local authority is very active in support of the school. The 'Progress Group', established after the last inspection, has provided challenge to governors and the school, while helping to identify where additional support was needed. This has included providing advice to improve Reception and supporting the acting headteacher.
- The curriculum is appropriate and meets pupils' needs. A wide range of clubs and educational visits supplement classroom learning. Music is a strong feature and all pupils in Years 5 and 6 have the opportunity to learn an instrument. The school's priority of developing the pupils' spirituality is met well. The chapel is open at lunchtimes for quiet contemplation and there are close links with the local church. Last year, nuns from the local convent visited the school to discuss their vocation with the pupils.
- Leaders allocate new sports funding well to support participation in the local school partnership and to provide specialist coaches and teaching of gymnastics and dance. This has led to increased pupil participation in sports activities and competitions and improved skills, for example, through leading activities at lunchtime.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - In spite of recent changes of membership, the governing body has strengthened its role since the last inspection. It has become more challenging so that it focuses closely on pupils' progress. As a result, governors make sure that each teacher must meet targets for improving pupils' progress in order to gain pay progression. Training, including in understanding assessment data, and more focused monitoring activities have extended governors' understanding of the school and its teaching. This has enabled them to question leaders more closely over the impact of actions they are taking to raise achievement. Governors fully understand the staffing difficulties posed to school leaders over the last year. They have made sure that as much support as possible has been available from the local authority. Finances are managed carefully and governors keep a close watch on the impact that pupil premium funding has on the progress of eligible pupils.

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	115173
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	442015

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	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sister Paula Cleary
Headteacher	Spencer Bragg
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2013
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