

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Reddish

Higginson Road, Stockport, Cheshire, SK5 6BG

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Older pupils do not build on the good start they make in the early years and Key Stage 1. Too few make better than expected progress by the time they leave the school.
- The most able pupils fail to make greater gains in their learning because they are not challenged to think hard, extend their skills or deepen their understanding.
- Pupils' success in mathematics falters because they spend too much time repeating work. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in different contexts.
- Teachers in Key Stage 2 pay too little attention to pupils' starting points. They do not always capitalise on what pupils can already do.
- Some teachers have low expectations of the pupils in their care. They readily accept and praise work which is below the standard expected for pupils' age and ability.
- The new assessment system is only just beginning to give leaders an up-to-date view of pupils' achievement. It is not helping all teachers plan activities which meet pupils' needs.
- Not all teachers have got to grips with the new National Curriculum. Some subjects are not taught in sufficient depth.
- Leaders have not been relentless enough in their drive to improve teaching. They do not insist all teachers take agreed teaching techniques on board.
- There is no shared understanding of good practice. Some leaders do not have high enough expectations of their colleagues. This means their views of teaching are too generous.
- Governors have too positive a view of the school. They have not challenged leaders about teaching, the progress of older pupils or the weaker achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Children gain a love of learning in the Nursery and Reception classes which prepares them well for Year 1.
- Good teaching, particularly in Year 2, means all groups of pupils exceed the standards expected for their age by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Pupils behave well, enjoy school and feel safe.
- Respect for all and tolerance for individual differences permeates the whole school. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern day Britain.
- Recent, effective action by leaders is halting a decline in standards. Their close watch on the early years means this area of school retains the strengths noted at the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited every classroom to observe teaching and learning. The headteacher took part in two lesson observations. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and other activities.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play and lunchtime. They met formally with five groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders, newly qualified teachers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' achievement and pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a small group of parents and carers at the start of the school day. They also took account of the 90 responses on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) to inform the inspection.
- Inspectors evaluated the responses from 32 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Bell

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sandra La Porta

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is also below average.
- The school population is stable. Fewer pupils join or leave the school throughout the school year than found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- There is before- and after-school provision on the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection. The latest report is available on the Ofsted website.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable turnaround of staff. Six new members of staff joined the school in September 2014. Three of this group are newly-qualified teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring teachers plan lessons which take account of pupils' starting points so they build on what pupils already know and can do
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve for their age and ability so they no longer accept work of insufficient quality or poor presentation
 - establishing a shared understanding among teachers and leaders about what is good teaching and using this as a benchmark to hold everyone to account for their work.
- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring all teachers have a deep understanding of how pupils learn mathematics so that they do not continue to repeat the same work as they move from class-to-class
 - enabling pupils to become fluent mathematicians who can solve problems and apply their mathematical learning to different contexts
 - making sure pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge across all subjects
 - enabling the most able pupils to make stronger progress by setting work that challenges and deepens their learning
 - tackling the weaker progress of disadvantaged pupils in some classes so this group do as well as all pupils in the school and across the country.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - insisting, and relentlessly checking, that teachers abide by whole-school policies and all put agreed teaching techniques into practice
 - revisit the system for checking on pupils' progress to ensure it provides leaders with up-to-date information on pupils' achievement, and it helps teachers to plan lessons which take account of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Considerable turnover of staff goes some way to explaining the school's decline since the previous inspection. Nonetheless, leaders have not been persistent enough in ensuring all pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, benefit from good quality teaching each and every day. The drive to improve teaching has not hit the mark because the checks on teaching, despite happening frequently, are not ensuring all teachers put new teaching techniques into place. Weaknesses in teaching are identified, but leaders are not relentless in making sure teachers act on advice swiftly. Expectations among leaders are too varied because there is no shared understanding of what constitutes good practice. Some leaders are too positive about what they see in classrooms and the work pupils produce. Consequently, everyone has too generous a view of teaching in the school.
- The systems to check and manage teachers' performance are not acting as a catalyst to bring about change quickly enough, because teachers' targets lack precision. Not enough attention is given to closing achievement gaps and ensuring all pupils have the chance to excel.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics are beginning to make a strong contribution to improving teaching. They are supporting teachers well through training and guidance. Other leaders are only just off the starting blocks; they are just beginning to have an influence on teaching across the school.
- Quality support means newly-qualified teachers hit the ground running; settle into school life seamlessly and get to grips with the craft of teaching quickly.
- Time and energy is being invested in equipping teachers to deliver the demands of the new National Curriculum, but with varied success. All subjects are covered, but not always in sufficient depth. An emphasis on improving pupils' mathematical achievement means the curriculum is sometimes too narrow in some year groups. Nevertheless, the curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures: a strong focus on valuing differences; links with the Parish and community through volunteer work and the School Chaplaincy plus an emphasis on social justice are successfully shaping well-rounded young citizens who are well equipped for life in modern day Britain.
- The primary school sports funding is being used well to lift teachers' skills in teaching physical education (PE) and ensure pupils benefit from expert tuition provided by sports coaches. Nonetheless, leaders are not checking the difference this is making to pupils' well-being and participation rates closely enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from small group teaching or emotional support sessions, which are a direct result of the use of the pupil premium funding. The use of this funding has not been entirely successful in the past. However, it is beginning to make more of a difference as achievement gaps are starting to close in some classes.
- Leaders ensure staff are alert to any concerns about pupils in danger of harm and appropriate and timely action is taken to keep pupils safe. The few incidents of poor behaviour, racist name-calling and bullying are recorded but not always analysed fully to identify common patterns.
- St Joseph's is a harmonious and happy school. Despite this strength, equality of opportunity is no better than adequate because pupils in Key Stage 2, particularly the most able, are not able to achieve as well as they should from their strong starting points.
- The local authority is providing extensive support, some of which the school pays for through a 'buy back' service. This work has not had enough impact in helping leaders and governors recognise the weaknesses in teaching and pupils' achievement over time.
- Two thirds of the parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to others. However, there are a number of parents who are discontent with many aspects of the school. The school's own questionnaire, completed earlier in the year, by almost all families, paints a more positive picture. Most parents spoken to during the inspection were fulsome in their praise of the school.
- Senior leaders have not turned a blind eye to the school's weaknesses. The priorities to bring about improvement are accurate so they have begun the journey to steer the school towards recovery. There are signs of success. Phonics teaching (linking the sounds that letters make) is stronger; Year 6 pupils are back on track to make expected progress; the strengths in early years have not been lost and teaching is improving in pockets across the school. Consequently, there is capacity to bring about the required improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed, supportive and generous with their time. Their desire to improve is reflected in a recent audit of their collective skills and the subsequent training to make sure everyone has the tools to do the job. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding, and use

published data to check the performance of the school. Their careful management of the school's finances has given them greater scope to strengthen leadership through new appointments.

- Despite recent improvements, governors have not challenged senior leaders sufficiently well about pupils' progress in Key Stage 2. Although they receive information from the headteacher and local authority adviser on a regular basis, they have an inaccurate view of achievement and teaching. They ask questions about pupil premium funding, but do not go far enough in championing the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. They agree to the headteacher's recommendations for teachers to advance up the pay spine without asking for unequivocal evidence that teaching is helping all pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Respect and tolerance for every individual is a rich vein that runs throughout the school. As a result, pupils are thoughtful, courteous and treat adults and each other with consideration. Lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils behave equally well outside of their classrooms. They make way for each other in corridors and enjoy their time on the playground.
- Adults manage behaviour well; pupils say 'teachers are strict but fair'. Most pupils, even the very youngest, follow instructions the first time regardless of which member of staff is speaking. Adults are particularly effective in supporting those pupils who find managing their own behaviour difficult. Sensitive support often stops situations getting out of hand, calms individual pupils down and reduces the risk of learning being disrupted.
- Pupils are proud of their school and wear their uniforms as a badge of honour. They are eager to learn and willing to work hard. They listen patiently even when teaching fails to ignite their interest. Pupils' books are untidy and presentation is often sloppy. This does not signal a lack of pride; it is a direct result of low teacher expectations.
- Attendance is improving over time and is almost in line with the national average. Nonetheless, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs do not come to school as often as their classmates. This is not helping to close achievement gaps.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Positive relationships, a focus on valuing differences and pupils' unshakeable confidence in adults underpins their enjoyment of school and freedom from bullying. School records confirm instances of harassment are rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including homophobic name-calling.
- Pupils are gaining the skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe. Their understanding of e-safety is particularly strong. They know how to use electronic devices safely and what to do if they receive uninvited messages or are subject to cyber-bullying. They know all about Stranger Danger, but are less sure on how to keep themselves safe from unwanted physical attention from adults. A proposed Sex and Relationship policy is seeking to plug this gap.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time, teaching in Key Stage 2, has not helped all pupils to thrive academically.
- Some teachers hamper pupils' ability to make stronger gains in their learning because they do not take account of what pupils already know and can do. Pupils' strengths and weaknesses are not built upon to help them overcome difficulties or deepen their learning. Teaching does not always help the most able to soar or the least able make up for lost ground quickly. Some teachers do not set their sights high enough; they readily accept poor presentation and insufficient quality and quantity of work as the best pupils can produce. In some classes, teachers are too quick to rely on low-level worksheets without considering how the activity will extend pupils' learning.
- These weaknesses are not deep-rooted in all classrooms. Teaching is typically stronger in Key Stage 1 and the early years and there are pockets of better practice in Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 6. Some teachers use questions skilfully to probe pupils' understanding and set about tackling incorrect knowledge or weak skills. Teachers set work in interesting contexts and use resources well to harness pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Without exception, all teachers forge positive relationships, help pupils to work cooperatively and promote pupils' speaking and listening skills well. Consequently, pupils are articulate, happy to share their ideas, not afraid to make mistakes and willingly accept feedback on their work.

- Teachers across the school develop a love of reading among pupils. The 'author day' during the inspection is just one example of how pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. Books are readily available in all classrooms and activities to help pupils understand what they read are systematically planned across the school. Recent improvements mean the teaching of phonics is now effective. Teachers are helping pupils to develop as young writers with plentiful opportunities to use their literacy skills across the curriculum.
- Teachers are less successful in teaching mathematics. Some teachers do not have a good enough understanding of how pupils learn mathematics.
- Some teachers are leading the way and marking pupils' books carefully so pupils know what they need to do to improve. Not all are following suit. Occasionally, teachers' marking is too generous, praising pupils for work which is not good enough for their ability or age.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils flourish across the early years and Key Stage 1 so they leave Year 2 with standards that are consistently above those expected for their age. From this point, they tread water. Although the standards at the end of Year 6 are typically above the national average, this does not represent good progress for many pupils. Older pupils are capable of much more given their strong starting points and positive attitudes to learning.
- The achievement of older pupils fell in 2014. Pupils made less than expected progress to reach broadly average standards. This is unusual and a result of considerable staff changes last year. Current data and the work in pupils' book confirm the decline has been halted. Pupils are making the progress they should over time but not enough are making stronger gains in their learning.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils from minority ethnic groups fare as well as other pupils in the school. The progress of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs is starting to improve but still trails behind that of their peers in some classes. Although this group often receives quality support in class and benefit from small group teaching sessions, they do not always have the chance to build on their learning until new ideas and skills are secure.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well by the end of Year 2. They fall back once they enter Year 3 and typically make slower progress over time. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils lagged behind their classmates by two terms in reading; one term in writing and almost a whole year in mathematics. They fared better against other non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, particularly in writing. However, they still left school two terms behind in mathematics and one term in reading. Pupils' books points to an improving picture in some classes which is helping to close achievement gaps.
- The most able pupils make expected progress and the numbers gaining the higher levels match, and sometimes exceed the national average. By the end of Year 2, almost twice as many pupils gain the highest level in writing when compared to all pupils across the country. Nonetheless, many of these pupils do not make greater progress as they move throughout Key Stage 2. This group are not challenged to aim higher. They complete activities with ease; do not have to think deeply and have too few opportunities to broaden their knowledge and skills.
- Standards in reading are typically above average and pupils generally make stronger progress in this subject. Pupils enjoy reading. They have the skills to tackle unfamiliar words and to understand what is written. Older pupils confidently carry out research because they can distil the key points from a range of texts. In recent years, pupils' success in the Year 1 phonics check has fallen. This is no longer the case; younger pupils are gaining the skills to become competent readers. Pupils write well; they have a good grasp of language and imaginative ideas which they are keen to put on paper. The quality and quantity of their writing is sometimes hampered by poor handwriting skills.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is a weakness in most classes. Pupils often repeat the same work, in the same way, even when it is clear they have grasped a new idea. They have too few opportunities to become fluent mathematicians who can deepen their understanding by applying their skills in different contexts.
- Achievement in other subjects is more variable. Pupils are not always given the opportunity to gain specific skills and knowledge in subjects such as science, history and geography because topics are not covered in depth.

The early years provision**is good**

- Despite weaknesses in Key Stage 2, leaders have kept a close watch on the early years. As a result, children get off to a good start, make good progress over time and start Year 1 ready to succeed. Children enter nursery with skills and knowledge that are fairly typical for their age. They are less secure in their mathematical skills and some areas of their personal and social development. They catch up quickly and leave Reception meeting, or exceeding, the national average in all areas of learning.
- Children thrive emotionally due to positive relationships and clear systems for keeping them safe and secure. They develop a love of learning which they take with them as they move throughout the school. Good quality teaching and provision means children develop the resilience to not give up; the communication skills to share their ideas and listen to others and the foundations for grasping number rules and patterns. Their natural curiosity is harnessed well by adults who match activities and resources to children's interests and needs. They are ready and eager to access the demands of the Key Stage 1 curriculum because adults make sure children develop good work habits and positive attitudes to learning.
- Children's behaviour is good; they follow instructions without faltering. The whole-school focus on 'treating others as you wish to be treated' is fostered very well so children work together happily in a harmonious and caring atmosphere.
- The early years is lively and purposeful whether children are working indoors or outside of the classroom. Adults keep track of children's progress. However, they do not always use the information they gather well enough to make sure children get the most out of every learning opportunity.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years is well organised; all adults make a positive contribution to children's learning because the early years leader has established clear expectations and everyone understands their role. Good use is made of data to identify where children lag behind and changes are made swiftly to provision to pick up on these weaknesses. Positive relationships are fostered with parents through 'Stay and Play' activities and sharing children's 'special work' books.

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	136430
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	456188

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	548
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John O'Sullivan
Headteacher	Stella Rosindale
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2012
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