

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Limes Avenue, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 2SG

Inspection dates	7–8 October 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a very effective and continually improving school which nurtures and supports pupils' education and their physical and personal development exceptionally well.
- Determined and focused senior leaders and knowledgeable governors have ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement have greatly improved since the previous inspection.
- Effective middle leaders make a good contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils benefit from an exciting curriculum which stimulates their eagerness to learn.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They are welcoming, well behaved, and are very proud of their achievements.
- The quality of teaching, including in the early years, is good. Teachers and teaching assistants accurately assess pupils' performance and ensure that they progress well.
- Phonics is taught exceptionally well. For the last two years the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected standard in phonics has been well above average.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2015, all pupils made at least expected progress in writing and mathematics, and outstanding progress in reading.
- In Year 2 pupils made good progress. In 2015 they attained standards which were in line with those expected for their age in all subjects.
- Parents are very complimentary about the school. They say that their children are safe and well looked after, and feel very well informed.
- Early years provision for children in the Reception class is good. As a result, children's attainment has been well above average for the last two years; it continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers in Key Stage 1 do not always challenge pupils, especially the most-able, to achieve as well as they could.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils have a deep enough understanding of mathematics or of its essential importance in everyday life.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding and to raise pupils' attainment further, by:
 - ensuring that pupils, especially the most-able, are challenged to achieve to the very best of their abilities in all subjects in Key Stage 1
 - making sure, in all years, that teachers consistently deepen pupils' understanding of mathematics, and enable them to develop a full appreciation of its importance in everyday life.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- This school has greatly improved since the previous inspection. It is well led and managed by a headteacher and senior leaders who are not afraid to take good advice and learn from other schools and specialists. Over the last 18 months leaders have focused more on harnessing the skills and strengths of staff and governors in order to move the school forward. This has been done successfully, enabling the school to transform into a place where the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are good.
- School leaders, including those responsible for English and mathematics, play a crucial role in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They ensure that all staff take a consistent approach to assessing how well pupils are doing, routinely check on the quality of work in pupils' books and provide effective mentoring and support to improve teachers' practice.
- Pupils, and children in the early years, benefit from a well-planned and interesting curriculum which develops their reading, writing and mathematical skills well in a wide range of subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils pursue their Mexican and Mayan culture topic in mathematics, by weighing the ingredients for various indigenous foods, and learn about the biology and habitat of the guinea pig in English, science and geography. Senior leaders are looking at ways of extending this type of work to all year groups, particularly in mathematics.
- The school's work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well is highly effective. Leaders use the extra funds to make sure that all such pupils have the opportunity to attend the breakfast club and to participate in sporting activities and educational visits. Disadvantaged pupils are given extra support with their learning when it is needed. This helps to ensure that they make good progress across the school and attain as well as their peers.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils embrace the school's Catholic ethos and raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils learn about other cultures and the major world faiths. They enjoy visiting museums and local places of interest, and have a good appreciation of visual and performing arts. Such extra-curricular activities have a positive impact on pupils' development and progress.
- Senior leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils know how their community fits into the culturally diverse nature of Lancashire and further afield and regularly meet pupils from schools which are different to their own. Pupils have an acute sense of fair play, respect for the law and democratic principles.
- The primary school sports fund is well spent. It has enabled the school to purchase climbing equipment, bibs and tags for competitive sports and outdoor play equipment. Funding has increased pupils' participation in various sports and supported their success in national chess championships.
- The school's work to challenge discrimination, foster good relations and promote equality is good. This is a very harmonious school in which all pupils, including the increasing number of children with English as an additional language, are able to thrive and succeed.
- The school's relationship with parents is excellent. Parents are highly complimentary about the support for all children, especially those with disabilities and special educational needs. They say that they can always talk to a member of staff, including the headteacher, about any aspect of their children's learning and support.
- The school has a productive relationship with the local authority's school improvement partner. Most recently, advice has been provided on developing outdoor provision in the early years and support has been given to governors on analysis and interpretation of data.
- Senior leaders and governors appreciate the importance of getting the next stage of the school's development right. They have made it a priority to closely monitor and evaluate all actions and initiatives to further improve pupils' achievement and ensure that all pupils continue to make at least good progress, and attain well in all subjects.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is good. Most governors have been with the school throughout its journey to get to good. All governors are well trained and have a thorough understanding of what the school does well, and where there is still work to be done.
 - The governing body knows that the pupil premium funding is making a difference to the lives of the pupils it supports. It is aware that the school's actions to raise levels of achievement for disadvantaged

pupils are effectively helping to ensure that any gaps between these pupils and their peers are minimal.

- Governors regularly challenge senior leaders, especially in relation to the school's priorities of raising levels of attainment in Key Stage 1 and improving the quality of mathematics teaching across the school.
- Governors know that the quality of teaching is good and improving because information on teachers' performance is shared with them and they come into school to observe teaching and talk to pupils. Governors are prepared to reward teachers for their good work, but only if they demonstrate that they are meeting their targets and improving standards.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All members of staff are well trained and familiar with their statutory responsibilities. They know exactly what to do if a pupil or child in the early years raises a concern about their safety or welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, including in the early years, is good, and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to ensure that pupils find learning interesting and engaging. Their good training and effective use of information on pupils' performance, enables them to offer a variety of different activities which support pupils' good and outstanding progress.
- Pupils learn in stimulating and vibrant classrooms which celebrate their work and provide opportunities for them to seek out information to help to improve their grammar, punctuation, spelling and work in mathematics.
- Teachers regularly check the quality of pupils' work. They ensure that their marking is of a very high standard and always indicate to pupils how they can improve their learning. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that they found their teachers' advice helpful, and that they were often given time to 'fix' and improve their work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in English, focusing on developing pupils' understanding of the structure of the English language and the importance of good grammar. Across the school, including in the early years, pupils are encouraged to use similes, 'interesting adjectives' and alliteration to improve their written work. Teachers always check pupils' spelling and punctuation. They consistently promote reading, and provide many opportunities for pupils to write in different styles.
- Teachers expect pupils to fully participate in all activities, and share their learning. This was exemplified in a lower Key Stage 2 English class where pupils were learning about natural disasters. The teacher prepared pupils well for their writing by asking searching questions and discussing the characteristics of factual writing. After this, pupils watched two short video clips about earthquakes. After making comprehensive notes, they were able to share their ideas, appreciating the devastating consequences of earthquakes in terms of loss of life and property.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled in ensuring that pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs are always actively engaged in learning. Teaching staff do this through their highly focused one-to-one work, small-group teaching and support in class. On several occasions during the inspection, disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs were observed making accelerated progress in class. Work in books confirms that all of these pupils make good progress over time.
- Many pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, are confident mathematicians. They challenge themselves with difficult problem-solving tasks and work through calculations logically. This was evident in an upper Key Stage 2 mathematics class where pupils were engaged in different activities. While one group calculated ship sailing times, another tried out different methods for subtracting two-digit numbers. The most-able pupils successfully used a number of strategies to solve the problem of using the numbers one to seven, in any combination, to add up to one hundred. However, not all teachers always deepen pupils' understanding of mathematics in this way, or ensure that pupils have a full appreciation of the importance of mathematics in everyday life.
- Most teachers plan activities which challenge pupils of all abilities, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. At times, however, some pupils, especially the most able in Key Stage 1, do not achieve to the best of their abilities because they are capable of responding to work that is even more challenging.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils, and children in the early years, learn and play well together in this harmonious school. Pupils' attendance is consistently above average. They wear their school uniform with pride, and enjoy learning about the world around them.
- Pupils say that they feel safe, well looked after and cared for. They know that they can speak to any member of staff about any concerns they might have and are confident that any such concerns will be listened to, dealt with quickly and taken seriously.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe while using the internet. They know that they should never share personal information with anyone when online, and are well aware that cyber-bullying can take place on the internet, mobile phones and hand-held games.
- Older pupils learn about various dangers associated with drug and alcohol use and of the dangers of smoking. All pupils learn about road, fire and water safety. This helps to develop their understanding of safe and unsafe situations and of dangers and risks.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils, and children in the early years, are of the view that behaviour is good most of the time. Governors and staff are of this view too, as are those parents who talked to the inspector and completed the online Parent View questionnaire. Inspection evidence, including a check on the school's behaviour logs, shows that behaviour is typically good.
- Pupils look out for each other and keenly execute their duties as school prefects, council members and helpers. This was evident when talking to Year 6 pupils about their mentoring roles and responsibility for making sure that Reception children are happy and safe.
- Pupils are courteous, well mannered and respectful towards each other, adults and visitors. They behave sensibly at all times and are studious in lessons and follow instructions well.
- Pupils are orderly at lunch times, move around the school with a minimum of fuss and enjoy taking turns when playing games or using wheeled toys and various apparatus.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly confident and self-assured. They enjoy talking about their work and are immensely proud of it. Many enjoy carrying out extended research projects from their homework menu because they 'love learning'.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying rarely, if ever, happens. They have a good understanding of most forms of discrimination such as racism, which they say is 'when you make fun of someone's culture and you judge them'. They say that such behaviour never happens in school and know that any form of discrimination is wrong, and will always be taken seriously by all school staff.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has greatly improved since the previous inspection. The progress of all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils, is at least good across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Historical data show that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 continued to improve for the three years up to 2014. In that year, pupils reached the expected standards for their age.
- School data show that further improvements were made in 2015. For example, provisional data indicate that standards attained by pupils in Year 6 in 2015 were above average in reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling, and in line with those expected for their age in writing and mathematics. This represents at least good progress from their below-average starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 2.
- This year pupils have got off to an excellent start. Work in pupils' books, discussions with pupils and parents and the school's own information about progress, indicate that the school is moving in the right direction and continuing to improve.

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the national phonics screening check has been well above average for the last two years. This is because teachers and teaching assistants are well trained and take a consistently effective approach to teaching phonics. Those pupils who read for the inspector thoroughly enjoyed reading. The books the older pupils chose to read included a variety of authors and a wide range of styles, while those who found reading difficult used their phonic skills well to sound out and read unfamiliar words.
- School records show that standards attained by pupils in mathematics have improved across the school. This is because teachers focus on developing pupils' use of different methods and strategies in their calculations and routinely engage pupils in problem-solving activities. However, senior leaders have made it a priority to ensure that all teachers take a consistent approach to deepening pupils' understanding of mathematics and developing their appreciation of its importance in everyday life.
- Pupils' progress in writing is good. They have many opportunities to write at length about their regular school trips and visits and are skilled at writing in different styles. Most pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are exceptionally strong because teachers take a consistent approach when checking the accuracy of their work.
- Comparisons between disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and all pupils nationally have to be treated with caution as the Year 6 cohort was small in 2014. Their attainment was below that of all pupils nationally but their progress was as good as all pupils in mathematics, below in reading and well above in writing; several of them made outstanding progress from very low starting points. The exceptionally good care and support that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs received in 2015 helped to ensure that they made accelerated progress across the school. They continue to make good progress this year.
- There were very few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 and even fewer in 2015. However, the school has well-developed systems for tracking pupils' performance. This information and work in pupils' books show that, in almost all years, disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Highly effective support is available for any pupils in danger of falling behind.
- School information shows that in 2015, pupils in Year 6 attained very highly in reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling. It is evident from discussions with pupils about their work, and checking work in their books, that teachers are setting increasingly harder work for the most able. However, this is not always the case, particularly in Key Stage 1 where pupils, especially the most able, are not always challenged to achieve to the very best of their ability.

Early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of all aspects of the early years provision, including teaching and learning, are good. Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception class because staff have very high expectations of what children are capable of achieving and ensure that they benefit from an exciting and memorable curriculum.
- Well-organised assessment information indicates that children enter the Reception class with varying skills and abilities in different areas of learning. However, the skills of most are in line with those typical for their age.
- Most children made good progress in all areas of learning in 2014, and a well above-average proportion attained a good level of development and were well prepared for Year 1. The school's own records show that an even larger proportion attained a good level of development in 2015.
- Children currently in the Reception class, including disabled children and those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged children, are making even better progress. Areas of learning which were not quite as strong in recent years, such as listening and attention and understanding of the world have been greatly enhanced. Children are currently progressing very well.
- Children soon become familiar with routines in Reception. They listen carefully to adults, follow instructions well and enjoy asking and answering questions, especially during story time.
- Good teaching helps to ensure that children are highly communicative and very eager to cooperate with each other and talk about their experiences. This was evident during snacktime when a small group of children sat down to enjoy their fruit and milk. After discussing which fruits they liked and helping each other to open their milk bottles, they spontaneously broke out into song before going outside to play.
- Both indoor and outdoor learning and playing areas are arranged thoughtfully. Children know where they can go to practise their writing skills, experiment with water and sand, count and measure, and engage in

role-play. Children are proud of their art work, which is exhibited around the classroom.

- Parents are very happy with their children's development and progress, and take every opportunity to participate in their children's learning. Parents know that they can talk to staff both before and after school. They say that they can regularly bring their younger children into the Reception class for 'getting to know you', 'stay and play' and 'rhyme time' sessions.
- Children behave sensibly and safely when playing outside on their new climbing frame and using various wheeled toys. Children's appreciation of the natural world is highly developed. They are eager to talk about their chickens and cockerels and the many plants and vegetables that they help to cultivate.
- Staff ensure children's safety by applying the same good safeguarding procedures in operation in Key Stages 1 and 2 to the early years.
- The early years manager's priorities for the future include improving provision by further developing outdoor learning and the school's wooded area.

School details

Unique reference number	119667
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10002286

This inspection 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	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Killalea
Headteacher	Anne O'Brien
Telephone number	01254 706264
Website	www.stjosephsdarwen.co.uk
Email address	St.Josephs@blackburn.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 September 2013

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.)
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has a very small, but growing proportion of children with English as an additional language.
- Children in the early years provision attend the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the time of the previous inspection two teachers, one newly qualified, and a learning mentor have been employed. The senior leadership team has been reorganised and three new governors have joined the governing body.
- A breakfast club is available to pupils. This is managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector listened to pupils reading and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised with senior leaders.
- The inspector considered 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own surveys of parents' views. A meeting was held with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Responses to the inspection questionnaire completed by 12 members of staff were considered.
- A meeting was held with three governors. A telephone conversation took place with the Chair of the Governing Body. Meetings were also held with school leaders and staff responsible for English, mathematics, children in the early years, and provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- A meeting took place with two representatives from the local authority.
- A range of documents were examined. These included information about pupils' progress, the school's reviews of its own performance and checks on the quality of teaching, development plans, various records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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