

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Rutland Street, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR4 6HY

Inspection dates	9–10 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
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

- The resolute and determined leadership of the headteacher and of leaders at all levels has rigorously and successfully addressed previous weaknesses. The school is much improved since the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching is now consistently good or better, accelerating the rates of progress that current pupils make in their learning.
- Outcomes for pupils are good and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils clearly enjoy their work, tackling learning with determination and a strong desire to succeed. They work extremely hard and very productively.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning from their individual starting points, and achieve well. The rates of progress current pupils make in their learning is accelerating rapidly.
- Children in the early years make a fast start in their reading, writing and understanding of number. They play and learn happily together, making excellent progress. Teachers and teaching assistants know their children very well and know exactly how to help them learn.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They assess their work carefully and accurately, and give timely support and guidance. This is appreciated by pupils, who respond thoughtfully.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are very polite, friendly, courteous and have good manners.
- Pupils' consideration of others and their exemplary attitudes to learning ensure that their personal development and welfare are outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders have not yet ensured that teaching is strong enough to allow all pupils to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in writing are not
- Occasionally, work set is not challenging enough, especially for the most-able pupils.
- Sometimes teachers' questioning does not challenge pupils' thinking or stretch their

as good as in reading and mathematics.

understanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should ensure that the quality of teaching improves still further so that all pupils make the rapid and sustained progress needed to reach the highest standards of which they are capable by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are consistently set challenging tasks to extend their learning, especially the most-able pupils
 - making sure that the questions asked by teachers challenge pupils' thinking and stretch their understanding
 - continuing to provide opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their writing skills across the wider curriculum, writing for a variety of audiences.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and all leaders have been unwavering in their determination to secure an excellent standard of education for pupils in the school. They have worked tirelessly to eliminate underperformance, improve the quality of teaching and accelerate the pace of progress pupils make in their learning. They have been successful.
- Pupils now achieve strongly across the curriculum, although the standards they reach in writing are not as high as in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors have created a school where high expectations are the norm, and pupils are allowed to excel. The positive, caring and supportive culture has resulted in pupils having exemplary attitudes to learning, working exceptionally hard to succeed.
- Leadership is not yet outstanding because the drive of leaders to ensure excellence has not yet resulted in outstanding teaching. Consequently, although pupils' progress is good, too few are making rapid progress across all year groups and subjects.
- Leaders, including governors, have a very accurate picture of what the school does well. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of the school's performance are incisive and detailed. Plans to further improve the school are well thought through, measurable and detailed. A sense of drive and urgency to continue to improve is evident in all that the school does.
- Procedures to check the quality of teaching are very effective, and now involve middle leaders as well as the senior leadership team. All leaders are skilful in ensuring that their analysis and interpretation of information about pupils' progress lead to actions that address any areas of concern.
- Training for all staff is carefully planned to meet both individuals' professional needs and whole-school priorities. Good use has been made of the support and training offered by the St Bede's Deanery Teaching School Alliance. Individual performance management objectives for staff are challenging, reflecting the high expectations of the school.
- The school's curriculum is now broad, rich and balanced. Pupils' strong personal development is in part due to a curriculum that strongly contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Teachers work closely together to review the curriculum regularly, checking that it meets the specific needs of pupils in St Joseph's and reflects their interests. It is enriched by a wide range of trips and visitors to the school. Pupils have the chance to participate in a number of extra-curricular clubs which support their learning. These are appreciated and valued by both pupils and parents.
- The sports funding for primary schools is used well. The school now takes part in a range of competitive sports and opportunities to learn to swim are offered to most year groups. The teacher delivering physical education (PE) lessons is more confident and skilled, and has worked alongside the specialist PE leader from the local secondary school.
- Leaders and governors have carefully and effectively managed pupil premium funding, addressing school-specific needs. The impact of these actions is clearly seen through the progress made by the very small number of disadvantaged pupils across the school, whose progress matches that of other pupils.
- Links with parents are very positive. Parents appreciate that the school gives all children an equal opportunity to succeed and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. Every parent who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that they would recommend the school to another parent, and that their child is happy in St Joseph's. There were many very supportive comments made on the school's own questionnaire that was returned by nearly every parent during the previous month.
- The school has benefited from excellent support, both from schools in the St Bede's Deanery Teaching School Alliance and from training and support both brokered and offered by the local authority.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has significantly improved since the last inspection, including the appointment of some new governors. Governors are highly professional and clear about their role. They are dedicated to school improvement. They now have a very clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, gained not only from accurate reports and attendance at meetings but also from their own monitoring of school performance alongside members of the senior leadership team.

- Governors provide both challenge and support to the school. They are rigorous in their examination of the school's performance data, and regularly ask questions regarding the progress of different groups of pupils in different classes. Governors are adept at helping to set priorities for the school, and hold senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching and learning.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are extremely effective. The headteacher and her senior team are experienced and highly skilled in dealing with all external agencies, and work well with parents and other stakeholders to establish a pervading ethos of care. Pupils benefit from the culture of safety and security that has been established in St Joseph's, and are confident that the school will continue to keep them safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is now consistently good, and some remains outstanding. Across all areas of the school, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Lessons are carefully planned and teachers are skilled in identifying when pupils begin to fall behind or have not grasped a concept.
- Lessons are interesting and lively, and learning usually proceeds at a good pace. Most teachers use good subject knowledge to structure learning effectively. They use questions well to check pupils' understanding, but occasionally opportunities are missed to ask questions that stretch pupils' thinking further.
- Teachers usually pitch work correctly, and provide the right amount of challenge for different groups of pupils in their class, allowing them to make good progress in their learning. Occasionally, some work set can be too easy, especially for the most-able pupils.
- The feedback provided to pupils by teachers is consistently of a high standard across the school. Pupils are allowed time to read and respond to the marking, and are skilled in doing so. This supports their next steps in learning well.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and usually ensure that the pace of learning enables pupils to concentrate and be fully involved for the duration of every lesson. Pupils' attitudes to their work and their learning are exemplary. They work very hard, produce large amounts of written work in every lesson, and know how to be successful learners.
- In mathematics, basic skills are taught well and regularly consolidated through problems set by teachers. Pupils are also becoming increasingly adept at using reasoning to justify solutions. In a Year 6 class, pupils were able to find specific percentages of different numbers to justify a choice between two options. In Year 4, pupils were able to provide written justification for their assertion that the solution to a 2-digit number multiplied by a 1-digit number is always a 2-digit number is correct or not.
- Pupils write enthusiastically and with great imagination, often because their writing is linked to the topic they are studying or the class novel they are reading. Pupils in Year 2 used music and drama to recreate key elements of the local historical story of Grace Darling, before moving on to write a poem. In another Year 6 class, pupils carefully structured a balanced argument as to whether parents should wear pyjamas when collecting or dropping off children at school. In all classes, pupils were able to write at length, neatly and with exemplary presentation.
- Reading and the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) are carefully developed through Key Stage 1. Skills are deepened and extended as pupils move through school. Pupils in Year 6 spoke enthusiastically to an inspector about the books they read at home. Pupils are encouraged to explore different texts, often linked to the topic they are studying, and this helps them to develop a love of reading.
- Teaching assistants and teachers work closely together to ensure that timely and constructive advice and support are given to pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability. The quality of support is high, whether adults are working with a group or an individual pupil, resulting in good academic progress as well as strong emotional and social development. The role and impact of teaching assistants in St Joseph's are strengths of the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils show respect for each other's opinions, and work happily, enthusiastically and cooperatively in lessons. Attitudes to learning are excellent; pupils work hard and with self-motivation. Pupils have great confidence in their teachers, knowing they will value their efforts. They know they must work hard to achieve success. Any low-level disruption in lessons is very rare.
- Pupils thrive in the caring, positive environment in the school. Their physical and emotional well-being is very good.
- Pupils report that they feel extremely safe at all times. They are aware of the different types of bullying that they may encounter, including cyber bullying. They have full confidence in all adults in school to deal with any misbehaviour that may occur.
- Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school, and could not tell inspectors any ways in which it could be improved, as it was already 'perfect'.
- In their responses to the online questionnaire, all parents reported that their children are safe at school.
- Older pupils are able to speak maturely about the careers they wish to pursue in later life, many with high aspirations. Occasionally, however, a small minority of pupils appear to lack a little confidence in themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff set very high standards to which pupils respond well. Pupils' behaviour in the playground, in the dining hall and as they move around school is exemplary.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly, displaying excellent manners at all times. They are confidently able to hold sensible conversations with adults.
- Pupils respond eagerly to the exciting learning environments. The school is well ordered and tidy, with many impressive displays in corridors and classrooms of key information, pupils' work and topics studied.
- Levels of attendance have increased slightly year on year, and are now above average. The rates of persistent absence have slowly declined to well below average. Pupils are happy at school, and enjoy coming to school every day.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Progress and attainment have continued to be strong since the last inspection. Assessment information, the school's own detailed and informative tracking information and the quality of work in books clearly indicate that current pupils in every year group are now making consistently good progress in English and mathematics, as well as other subjects across the curriculum.
- Current pupils start Year 1 with skills that are broadly average, and inspection evidence confirms that they are making progress that is at least good in Years 1 and 2. Pupils have again achieved highly in the national phonics check in Year 1, the proportion meeting the expected standard being well above average.
- Progress is accelerating quickly across Key Stage 2. Current pupils are now making at least good progress in their learning from their individual starting points. By the end of Year 6, pupils are very well prepared for secondary school, both in terms of academic achievement, their highly positive attitudes to learning and their knowledge of how to be a successful learner.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind, including in the early years. Staff make effective provision for these pupils either within class, in small groups or individually. This includes pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and the above-average proportion who have English as an additional language. These pupils make good progress from their starting points because teachers give them activities that are well matched to their ability and needs.
- As a result of effective use of pupil premium funding, the very small number of disadvantaged pupils make good progress and achieve well across the school in both English and mathematics. Although the number of disadvantaged pupils is too small in most year groups to make any reliable statistical comparison, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates is narrowing, with both groups performing equally well.

- Although the most-able pupils in school make similarly good progress to their classmates from their starting points, some pupils' progress could be even more rapid in order to enable them to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.

Early years provision

is good

- Children are eager to learn and explore. They thoroughly enjoy the opportunities given to investigate and learn happily together. Reception and Nursery children's play is lively, creative and imaginative.
- Children now start early years with levels of skills and knowledge which are expected for their age, although in previous years it was below this level. As a result of good teaching, excellent provision, careful observation and perceptive questioning, the proportion of children who leave the Reception class with a good level of development continues to improve and is just above average. Evidence from inspection shows that it looks likely to rise sharply.
- Children quickly learn essential social and emotional skills, and are able to take turns, share and apply themselves to tasks. They are thoughtful and kind towards each other. The expectations of all adults are high, and there is a tangible sense of urgency and excitement in the early years setting.
- All adults sensitively and skilfully intervene in order to develop and enrich children's use of language. Adults play and work alongside children to explore and practise new skills, observing children carefully, building on their interests and effectively using open-ended questions to stimulate their imagination and creativity.
- In both Nursery and Reception there is a buzz of excitement as children play and learn, many able to stick at a task and maintain their concentration. Adults model speaking and listening very effectively to develop children's vocabulary, such as one child saying, 'I'm running as fast as light.'
- There is a wide range of interesting and exciting activities for children both inside and in the small outside space. Occasionally, opportunities for children to learn with an adult outside can be missed.
- Rigorous, accurate assessment of children's learning is used well to design and plan lessons that capture pupils' interest and build rapidly on existing foundations. All staff have an acute awareness of the unique learning needs of each child, and use this knowledge to capitalise on every opportunity to both check and further each child's development.
- Basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are promoted very effectively. Every opportunity is taken to provide children with activities to write, mark make and count, although some boys are reluctant to access these areas. Children in Reception are able to describe the properties of 3-D shapes, some identifying and naming a square-based pyramid, a triangular-based pyramid and a cone.
- All groups of children make typical progress and many make progress that is better than this in early years, including the most able, those who have special educational needs or disability, and disadvantaged pupils. However, not all pupils are yet making consistently high rates of progress.
- Leaders are vigilant in all aspects of safety and safeguarding children's welfare. Judging by the confidence with which children play and learn, they clearly feel safe and secure. Children's behaviour is excellent.
- The well-respected and skilful early years leader has successfully established a talented and dedicated team of staff. All adults are constantly refining their practice in order to maintain the highest standards of provision. There are well thought through plans to make further improvements. Leadership of early years is excellent.

School details

Unique reference number	108841
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10002032

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Riddell
Headteacher	Maureen Galbraith
Telephone number	0191 5537725
Website	www.st-josephs-rc-primary.co.uk
Email address	st.josephs.primary@schools.sunderland.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 March 2016

Information about this school

- St Joseph’s Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School is a slightly larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support from pupil premium funding is well below average. (This is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- Early years provision is part time in Nursery and full time in the Reception class.
- The school meets the government’s floor standards which set out the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school is part of the St Bede’s Deanery Teaching School Alliance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in lessons, including one jointly observed with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors listened to some pupils read and reviewed a sample of their work alongside the headteacher. The inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with different groups of people involved with the school. These groups included pupils, two governors, the headteacher, other members of the teaching staff and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documents including information on pupils' achievements, the school's data on current and recent progress and attainment, and the school's view on how well it is doing. Inspectors also viewed the school improvement plan, documents relating to safeguarding and records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 responses to Parent View and nine responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Philip Scott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Barbara Comiskey	Ofsted Inspector
Dominic Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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