

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Hazell Avenue, Aylesbury HP21 7JF

Inspection dates	4–5 May 2016
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

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Many are just starting to learn English when they begin school. Skilful teaching helps them to make rapid progress in speaking and listening and grow in confidence, which supports their wider learning. Attainment by age five is broadly average.
- The deputy headteacher's determined work to improve teaching, particularly in Years 1 and 2, has paid off. Teaching is mostly good. Any weaknesses are known and support is given.
- Attainment at age seven in reading, writing and mathematics is high. Almost every child reaches the level expected for their age. The proportion reaching the higher level is above average.
- Gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are closing. Boys' attainment by the end of Year 2 has improved in recent years. Children who speak English as an additional language outperform their English-speaking peers in school and nationally.
- Parents go out of their way to bring their child to St Joseph's. They are absolutely right to feel their child is happy, safe and well cared for. Pupils confirm they feel safe and enjoy learning.
- Developing pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural skills and understanding is at the heart of day-to-day life in school. Pupils are well behaved, confident, caring and respectful.
- Senior leaders' focused actions since the last inspection have improved the quality of education while maintaining the school's strengths.
- Middle leaders play an active role in checking pupils' learning by observing them in class and looking at their work. They have good ideas for improving their subjects or areas of responsibility further.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ask the right questions to hold leaders to account.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Middle leaders and governors do not make full use of the range of information available to them.
- Systems to assess and track pupils' progress across the curriculum are at an early stage of development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop systems to assess and track pupils' progress across the curriculum to ensure that standards are as high in other subjects as they are in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - developing middle leaders' confidence and skills in using assessment information to analyse outcomes for pupils, identify exactly what needs to improve and take a greater lead in improving teaching
 - developing governors' skills in using a wider range of information to hold leaders more precisely to account.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and staff are ambitious for St Joseph's and its pupils and determined it will be a good or better school.
- The impact of senior leaders' actions to improve the school since the last inspection is apparent. The deputy headteacher's role in leading teaching and learning has been critical. She understands what good teaching and learning looks like and how to bring about and sustain improvement. With a calm determination, the deputy headteacher has kept the school on an upward trajectory during a difficult year. As English subject leader, she has been instrumental in improving the teaching of writing and reversing the dip in phonics outcomes seen in 2015. (Phonics refers to letters and the sounds that they make.)
- At the same time, the deputy headteacher has successfully nurtured a shift in mindset so that staff realise that leading improvement does not sit solely with senior leaders. Many middle leaders are new in post since the last inspection and some in the past year. Through monitoring they have developed a good understanding of strengths and where improvements are needed in their areas of responsibility over the course of the year. They acknowledge that they are not experienced or confident in using the school's assessment information to analyse patterns in outcomes over time and for different groups of pupils. They are not routinely leading work to improve teaching.
- The curriculum is well thought out. There is an appropriate and successful emphasis, given the high proportion learning English as an additional language, on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. This underpins pupils' access to a broad curriculum which covers all subjects, either through stand-alone lessons or linked through interesting topics. A range of additional clubs offer extra sporting activities over the course of the year.
- Systems have been put in place to assess and track pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics through the new curriculum. While the systems have been under development, the information has been overseen and analysed by the deputy headteacher. She has started to prepare middle leaders to share responsibility for the information through staff meetings and work with individuals. Assessment systems for other subjects have not yet been implemented.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is at the heart of the school's work. The gospel values of respect, honesty, caring and truth and the school's aims of developing self-confidence, independence and responsible social behaviour are seen as interwoven with wider British values. Inspectors talked with confident pupils who appreciated the need for rules and understood how the school council gave them all a say in the running of the school. They are well prepared for their age for life in modern Britain, not least because leaders make the most of the fact that the school community is a miniature version of Britain with its many cultures and languages.
- Additional funding is used well. Pupil premium funding is targeted to train teaching assistants to give eligible pupils extra support with their learning. Its impact is apparent in improved attainment for this group over time. The sport premium is used to open up new experiences and ways of staying fit and healthy for pupils, to offer opportunities to compete in events with other schools and to develop staff's confidence and skills in teaching physical education. Evidence to confirm the impact of this funding is limited because leaders do not quantify how many more pupils are participating in activities or whether staff's teaching, as well as confidence, has improved.
- The local authority increased its level of support prior to the last inspection. Termly focus groups have been effective in holding senior leaders and governors to account for the school's progress. Some support has been useful, such as helping to secure the work of the interim headteacher. She has taken care of day-to-day management issues, so that the deputy headteacher could concentrate on improving teaching. Other activities have been less valuable, for example spending time preparing middle leaders and governors for inspection interviews rather than supporting them to develop their roles further.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Many governors are relatively inexperienced in their role but understand that they are there to hold the school to account, not to take responsibility for day-to-day matters. Several bring important skills from their professional lives.
 - Governors are clear about the school's strengths and areas for further improvement, because they are kept well informed by the deputy headteacher and through the chair's attendance at local authority focus group meetings. They know the kinds of questions they need to ask. Governors are not,

however, making full use of all published data or external information about the school. At times, they are not asking for precise enough information such as the measurable impact of additional funding.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Whatever post leaders are appointing to, they check carefully that applicants are both suitable to work with children and understand their responsibilities to keep children safe. Training for staff is up to date and takes account of current requirements. Systems for reporting any concerns in school and on to other agencies are clear. Senior leaders check carefully the reasons for any unexplained or long-term absences.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- The quality of teaching is much more consistent across the school than at the time of the last inspection.
- Lessons follow on logically from one to the next, building on what pupils learned previously. Teachers share with pupils what they are learning as a matter of course. Assessments of what pupils know and can do are generally accurate. Sometimes, staff do not make the best use of open-ended questions to check pupils' understanding and miss the chance to adjust activities to maximise learning during lessons.
- Phonics is taught precisely from the Reception classes upwards. Pupils are routinely encouraged to use their phonics knowledge when they are reading and writing in other lessons.
- The focus on improving the teaching of writing has paid off. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels has been above average for the past two years. Teachers explicitly teach pupils how to write for different purposes and how to organise their ideas before they start writing. Pupils have more opportunities to write at length and are expected to use their literacy skills when they are writing in other subjects.
- Teachers are very aware of the range of different needs in their classes and plan lessons carefully. They are well practised at helping pupils at an early stage of learning English make rapid progress in their communication skills. Teachers use interesting topics to hook boys in particular into writing, for example getting pupils to plan the questions they need to ask the suspects in order to solve a crime.
- Pupils who need to catch up have extra support. The most-able pupils are routinely set challenging tasks to stretch them to apply their learning, for example in mathematics.
- Staff are aware of the particular needs of individual disadvantaged pupils. On top of interventions funded by additional money, they go the extra mile on a day-to-day basis to, for example, hear them read or ask them a question during whole-class sessions.
- Pupils love learning. They enjoy reading and sing with great enthusiasm. While different pupils highlight different lessons as their favourite, there are no unpopular subjects.
- Teachers give pupils useful feedback about their work and demonstrate how they can improve during lessons. They do not, however, necessarily give pupils time to take the advice on board and have a go at making changes while it is still fresh in their minds.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All parents responding to Parent View think their children are happy, safe and well looked after. Those who added comments or spoke to inspectors praised the caring nature of the school.
- The school's aim to be a happy, welcoming school where everyone is valued is a reality. Talking about their country of origin is second nature for pupils. They are accepting of, and interested in, their different backgrounds.
- The school gives high priority to developing pupils' self-confidence. This was demonstrated by the way Year 1 pupils rose to the occasion of presenting the Ascension Day assembly during the inspection. Every member of the class took part, confident to perform in front of older pupils and parents.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs support the well-being of those pupils who attend. Staff are caring towards pupils, taking time to talk and play with them. They encourage pupils to look after themselves and develop independent skills, for example pouring their own milk and buttering toast.
- Pupils feel safe in school and confident about turning to staff if they have any concerns. They learn how to keep themselves safe, for example to 'think then click' when using the internet, and understand what the potential risks are in different situations
- Attendance is broadly average. A few pupils are frequently absent and others are taken out of school for

extended periods to visit their home country. Senior leaders work closely with families where attendance is a problem, drawing on the support of other professionals such as the school nurse if appropriate. They reinforce the importance of regular attendance by refusing to authorise lengthy absences.

- No pupils have been excluded during the past two school years. Staff are well equipped with strategies to prevent pupils who are at an early stage of learning English becoming frustrated because they do not understand and to deal with occasional challenging behaviour.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are sensible, respectful and caring as they move around school, eat their lunch and play with one another.
- Year 1 and 2 pupils' behaviour in the Ascension Day assembly was exemplary. They were attentive to, and respectful of, the pupils who were leading worship.
- Attitudes to learning are generally very positive. Pupils clearly enjoy school and their learning. They get on well with the tasks they are set in class, with or without adult support. Occasionally, a few pupils lose concentration in adult-led sessions when work is not quite at the right level for them or if they are not directly involved in discussion or questioning.
- Good attitudes to work are celebrated in class and in weekly assemblies. Pupils do not easily recall exactly what the words, such as 'resilience', are that the school uses to describe the characteristics of good learning, or what they mean. They are clear, however, that they need to listen carefully, do their best and not give up.
- A good proportion of parents responding to the survey did not know how well the school deals with bullying. This is probably because pupils are adamant that there is none. They understand that bullying is not the same as falling out, which pupils say does happen from time to time but is dealt with.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Attainment by age seven is above average. Virtually every pupil reaches the expected level for their age and the proportions reaching the higher levels are markedly better than seen nationally.
- Pupils of different abilities and from different groups make good progress during their time at St Joseph's. Their work shows how they develop their writing and problem-solving skills over time and how they use their literacy skills across the curriculum.
- The attainment of pupils who speak English as an additional language has gone from strength to strength. In 2015, they outperformed their English-speaking peers in school and nationally.
- The performance of some groups of pupils has noticeably improved in recent years. The in-school gap between boys and girls has narrowed. Boys reach higher standards than boys do nationally and attain almost as highly as girls nationally.
- The gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in school has narrowed year-on-year. Overall, they perform as well as other pupils nationally, although few of this small group reach the higher levels.
- Published figures show the performance of pupils with special educational needs or disability has improved. The school's information indicates that progress is stronger in Year 2, where teaching assistants have had more specialist training.
- Interesting topics build pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills across other subjects over time. The school does not yet have assessment systems in place to determine exactly how well pupils achieve across the whole curriculum. What inspectors can say, from first-hand experience, is that pupils' singing skills are well developed for their age. In assembly, pupils sang with accuracy, expression and feeling, including in a round.
- The interim headteacher, as headteacher of the junior school that most pupils move on to, confirms that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education when they leave St Joseph's.

Early years provision

is good

- The strengths seen in the early years provision at the last inspection have been maintained.
- On entry, children's communication and language skills are typically lower than expected for their age because many are at an early stage of learning English. For some children, this impacts on their confidence to join in and occasionally to manage their feelings.
- Children make rapid progress from the word go because staff understand how to support young children in learning English, tailoring their teaching accordingly, for example by using pictures, hand signs and facial expressions alongside talk. Staff create a safe, caring environment which nurtures children's social and emotional development and confidence to join in with activities.
- Children continue to develop well because teaching is good. Staff know children's individual needs well, providing extra support and challenge to boost or stretch them. Adults support learning well in both focused teaching sessions and when children have opportunities to choose what they do. For example, adults join in with role play to help children develop their ideas before they have a go at putting their story on paper in pictures or words. Staff provide challenging activities for the most-able young mathematicians.
- Staff are skilful in their questioning, using it to check children's understanding by getting them to explain their ideas and thinking and, in turn, encouraging them to stick with a task. This helps children learn to work and play independently and sustain concentration for considerable periods of time.
- Parents find the way staff help them to understand how to support their children's learning helpful. For example, in the 'stay and play' session seen during the inspection, staff carefully explained to parents what skills the various activities were intended to develop.
- By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is in line with five-year-olds nationally. The recently appointed early years leader is ambitious to build on this and is already developing ideas to improve provision further and tackle the stubborn gap between boys' and girls' attainment.

School details

Unique reference number	110478
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10009433

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sonia Adamo-Ibbotson
Headteacher	Ann Taylor
Telephone number	01296 484 618
Website	www.stjosephsrcinfant.bucks.sch.uk
Email address	office@stjosephrcinfant.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2014

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is an average-sized infant school. Children join the Reception classes full-time in the September of the school year they turn five.
- Two-thirds of pupils are from a background other than White British. Over half speak English as an additional language. Most who do so are at an early stage of learning to speak English when they join the Reception classes.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is below average.
- Very few pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding (additional government money for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals).
- The majority of class teachers have joined the school since the last inspection.
- The headteacher has been absent through ill health since September 2015. The headteacher of the neighbouring junior school, St Edward's, has been interim headteacher since November 2015. She provides support for the day-to-day management of the school for the equivalent of half the week.
- Three new governors have been appointed since the last inspection. The chair of governors took up post in September 2015.
- The pre-school that shares the school site is run by the governing body but was not inspected as part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all or part of 19 whole-class or group sessions, a third jointly with the deputy headteacher. They looked at a sample of pupils' work across the school to see how well pupils learn over time and to check the accuracy of the school's assessments.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The views expressed in 16 responses to the online staff survey were taken into account.
- Inspectors considered 28 responses to the online Parent View survey and spoke to some parents before school and in the 'stay and play' session.
- A range of information provided by the school was scrutinised, including the school's assessment information, checks on the quality of teaching and performance management, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Alison Bradley, lead inspector

Gill Peck

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

