

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Scratton Road, Stanford-Le-Hope, Essex SS17 0PA

Inspection dates	28–29 April 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

- St Joseph's has improved rapidly since the monitoring visit of January 2015. In particular, writing standards are higher and the quality of teaching has improved through more rigorous checks.
- The governing body is effective. A review of its work has brought about beneficial changes, and guidance is provided by an improvement board.
- The leadership structure is much more effective, particularly how phase leaders draw on the expertise and ideas of all staff to provide consistently good-quality teaching and learning.
- Specialist teaching, such as in mathematics, enhances pupils' learning.
- Pupils overall make good progress in their academic and personal development. They are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- The interesting and innovative curriculum stimulates pupils' curiosity and thirst for learning.
- Teaching assistants are effective, particularly when supporting pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is at the heart of everything the school does.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in and around the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They want to achieve and show good learning habits in school. They cooperate and collaborate well.
- Pupils say they feel safe and happy at school, and staff care for them well.
- Early years provision is a strength of the school. These children settle quickly, demonstrate a love of learning and make good progress.
- Parents support the school and make a strong contribution to their children's learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Writing tasks are not pitched at the correct level of difficulty for the most able pupils.
- Some pupils struggle at first when moving from Reception to the relative formality of the Year 1 and 2 classes, and so progress falters.
- The school's action plan does not clearly identify how the most important priorities for improvement are to be achieved, and a realistic time frame in which to do this.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of progress in writing of the most able pupils by:
 - ensuring that the activities given to the most able pupils are suitably challenging.
- Improve the effectiveness of school improvement planning by:
 - creating a more sharply focused plan for improvement with clear and measurable targets
 - including clear milestones so that leaders and governors can track progress and hold each other to account
 - setting a realistic time frame and monitoring progress to ensure that it is met.
- Improve the transition from Reception to Year 1 so that:
 - the level of formality and change in approach is introduced in a way that ensures that learning is continuous and there is no halt in the progress pupils make.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and determined to build further on recent improvements, particularly those made since the last monitoring visit carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in January 2015. After a relatively slow start, the school is now moving forward at a good pace. Several parents, for example, remarked on the good improvements over the last 12 months.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form an effective team, ably supported by phase leaders who have led significant improvements in their teams. For example, teachers now plan together, sharing expertise and ideas, and ensuring that pupils in their year groups have identical lessons.
- The school's ethos and values permeate all aspects of daily life, in particular the school's 'SMART values' such as 'Respect others, our environment and ourselves'.
- Senior leaders regularly monitor the work of the school, accurately identifying relative strengths and weaknesses that require improving.
- The school's plan for improvement is in the right general areas but it is not sufficiently clear about precisely what the school needs to improve further. It does not have sufficiently clear milestones against which leaders and governors can measure progress to ensure that what needs to be done is done, nor a realistic but challenging time frame.
- Leaders' clear arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching accurately identify how teachers can improve. Training is closely matched to teachers' needs and rigorous performance management drives improvements in teaching and learning.
- Subject leaders use a variety of methods, including checking work in pupils' books, to gauge the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their subjects and to make changes as necessary. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Much is done to ensure that pupils enjoy equal opportunities and benefit from all the school offers. The effective leadership of provision for special educational needs or disability ensure that pupils struggling with their work have the right extra help. The small number who struggle to manage their behaviour receive extra help too, and those with low self-esteem blossom through the caring, encouraging ethos. The specialist teacher's strong expertise enables the most able to do well in extra mathematics lessons because they benefit from the clarity of her explanations. However, in general class lessons, especially writing, these pupils rarely achieve beyond the level expected for their age by the time they leave school.
- The curriculum is good. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the imaginative tasks they are given. Often different topics start with an ingenious 'hook' to catch pupils' attention, such as when an unknown spacecraft 'crashed' in the school grounds. Intrigued pupils quickly become engrossed in learning. Visits and visitors enhance learning. Pupils as young as Year 1 enjoy the characters and plots of Shakespeare, partly because they are brought alive by an actor. Parents praised the increased number and range of clubs which further enthuse their children. Take-up at these clubs is high.
- The school has a good assessment system. Teachers understand it and use it consistently to measure progress and attainment. This enables the school to recognise if pupils are not making good progress and make the alterations necessary to ensure that they do.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school, underpinning much of its work. For example, pupils researched significant local historical events and worked with an artist to design murals for the local subway. Pupils have a clear sense of 'service'. In this 'Year of mercy', every year group, including the youngest, is taking responsibility for organising an event to help those less fortunate either locally, nationally or internationally.
- Pupils' understanding of British values is very strong. Pupils learn mutual respect and tolerance when they study other world religions. Through a local trust, pupils collaborate with other local schools to celebrate diversity. Their thorough understanding of 'democracy' was enhanced by holding their own general election, and learning the importance of each individual voting and the need to take personal responsibility for registering to vote.
- Leaders effectively target the use of additional pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils to support both their personal and academic development. As a result, the majority of these pupils are making progress similar to, and sometimes better than, their peers.

- The primary school sports funding is used effectively. Pupils benefit from working with specialist coaches so skills and techniques are enhanced. Sport is a strong feature of St Joseph's and so pupils participate in a good range of activities and enjoy competing with others. All are encouraged to participate, including those not naturally talented in sport. Pupils understand how to lead healthy lives.
- The school works closely with other local schools. Staff share expertise, such as new developments in assessment procedures.
- The local authority has given the school very good support since the previous inspection, for example helping to train and develop inexperienced subject leaders.
- The partnership with parents is good. Parents say they feel the new website and use of text messaging has improved communication. Parents appreciate the 'workshops' about important aspects of learning that help them support their children better. About four in every five parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, , would recommend the school to another parent. Through their association, parents play an active role in the school, supporting many events such as 'Mother's Day wrap' when pupils prepare presents for their mothers.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors benefit greatly from the improvement board set up by the local authority, particularly the advice, support and expertise of its members.
 - Although governors took too long to implement the review of their work suggested previously, they have responded well to it, taken swift action and made important useful changes.
 - Individual governor's skills and expertise, such as in accountancy and health and safety, are now used effectively to support the work of the governing body.
 - Governors have undertaken training so that, for example, they are better able to understand information about pupils' progress, to check pupils do well and challenge leaders when they do not.
 - Staff performance, including that of the headteacher and other teachers, is rigorously managed. All decisions taken, including about pay increases, are based on a good range of evidence from the robust challenge and support provided to staff.
 - Careful oversight of the school's finances, including additional funding, helps achieve good value for money. Forward planning enables governors to plan and prepare for fluctuations in pupil numbers.
 - Governors are strong advocates of a democratic approach. They survey pupils' opinions, and reshape the school's direction as a result. Currently they are exploring ways to use the website to gather parents' views more regularly, too.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders ensure that all staff training is up to date and that the school fully complies with the latest safeguarding guidance. Governors and all school staff are highly aware of their duty to keep pupils safe. Good relationships with external agencies ensure that leaders know who to refer to if they have a concern. The school explains its role in safeguarding pupils to parents, and works closely with parents to ensure that their children are well supported and safe from harm. For example, parents are appreciative of an information session about e-safety. The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View expressed confidence that their children are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because good-quality training, based on regular monitoring of teaching and learning, has been tailored to each teacher's needs.
- Relationships between pupils and the adults who teach them are very positive. Pupils trust staff so they are confident to answer questions knowing they will not be criticised if they are wrong.
- Classrooms are attractive and welcoming. Good-quality pupils' work is displayed to celebrate their success and show others what is possible.
- Teachers, in line with the school policy, give pupils clear guidance on how to correct mistakes in their work, and the time to do so.
- Teachers check pupils' understanding as their learning progresses. Teaching assistants are deployed well so no pupil is left confused and learning continues at a good rate.
- Teachers use questioning effectively, especially prompting and probing to draw out pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding.

- Pupils' good attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to the good pace of learning as little time in lessons is lost. In addition, the school's SMART values such as, 'Ask for help when we really need it', with the emphasis on 'really', encourage pupils to try to find ways of solving their own problems.
- Speaking and listening skills are promoted well by teachers who give pupils many opportunities to work together, discuss ideas and come to a consensus.
- Reading is taught well. Staff effectively teach the links between letters and the sounds they make, so pupils have a clear and accurate understanding when they come to unknown words in their own reading. Older pupils learn skills such as 'inference' from a wide range of interesting texts. Volunteers in school and parents at home play an important and effective role here, too.
- The teaching of writing has improved. The tools of writing, including spelling and handwriting, are taught methodically. Imaginative tasks in topic work, linked to other subjects, give pupils opportunities to write for a wider range of relevant and interesting purposes.
- The school's approach is typically to give pupils tasks of different levels of difficulty from which they select the one they feel is best. In some lessons, however, these are not sufficient. In writing, for example, the most able pupils do not have the harder work they need, and in some classes there is nothing further planned should they finish.
- Good teaching in mathematics means that pupils learn a good range of methods which they use to good effect when solving problems and reasoning answers. Good use is also made of equipment, so pupils have visual examples that help them better understand the process before moving into the abstract.
- Very effective use is made of subject expertise. In mathematics, for example, a teacher with particularly good subject knowledge develops the most able pupils' understanding to a deeper level.
- Teaching assistants effectively support pupils' learning, whether working alongside teachers or guiding groups needing extra help.
- Homework is used effectively for a range of purposes, including practising learning done in school and giving pupils opportunities to research and pursue their interests.
- The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View agree that their children are well taught at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.
- Pupils responding to their online survey agree that their teachers make sure they understand and help them to do their best.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. About nine in every 10 parents responding to Parent View feel their children are happy at school. The proportion of pupils responding to their survey stating they enjoy school was higher still.
- Many activities promote pupils' very clear understanding that individuals have rights but also responsibilities in society and communities.
- Assemblies are integral to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils take great pride in leading prayer, for example. They reflect on their lives in school and those less fortunate than themselves. Spirituality is found in many aspects of school life. For example, artistic representations of mood and atmosphere were discussed by pupils using paintings of the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the many opportunities to play a meaningful role in their school. Play leaders, for example, help staff ensure that lunchtime is a pleasant, friendly time. Each year, Year 6 pupils act as buddies for the youngest class, helping them settle by showing them around the school and taking them to lunch.
- Pupils appreciate that staff and governors ask their opinions and will incorporate their views in actions they take when possible.
- Pupils' understanding of safety is strong because they are given good instruction and explanation. For example, all the eldest year are taught safe cycling and an awareness of the dangers of drug misuse. Fire safety is linked to the curriculum, and all pupils understand e-safety and the potential dangers they should watch out for.
- Every pupil responding to their survey feels safe in school, and most parents agree. The overwhelming majority of pupils are confident that staff will listen and respond to any worries they have.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good overall. While the vast majority of pupils behave well, a small number, mostly boys, struggle to manage their own behaviour. They are given good support by staff to enable them to quickly return to learning. While three-quarters of parents responding to Parent View agree that behaviour is good, a number of parents expressed concerns.
- Pupils know, understand and mostly live by the school's SMART value, 'Take responsibility for our thoughts, our words and our actions'.
- The school is very inclusive. Pupils learn to work and play together well. During lessons they often have opportunities to work in groups and 'give and take'. The small number who struggle are given effective extra lessons when they are taught how to cooperate with others.
- Pupils know the difference between bullying and the natural falling out friends sometimes have. Nine in every 10 pupils say the rare occurrences of bullying are dealt with well by staff.
- The school has a calm, purposeful and orderly atmosphere, both in classrooms and around the school and its grounds. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming. They are proud of their school and wear their uniform with pride.
- Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy school and all it has to offer, and their parents recognise the importance of good attendance. Staff monitor absence closely to see that no pupil gets into bad habits.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is better and more consistent, so pupils generally maintain a good rate of progress from year to year, although some find the change from Reception to Year 1 difficult initially and this can slow their progress. Four in every five parents responding to Parent View agree that their children are making good progress. In their online survey, pupils themselves agree that teachers help them do their best and give them challenging work.
- The school's checks on progress, and the quality of work in pupils' books, show that the vast majority of pupils in all year groups are making good progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics.
- These improvements are the result of leaders and governors taking effective action, particularly since the monitoring visit of 2015. Throughout the school, they are leading to faster progress and higher standards. This has a cumulative effect. However, the inconsistencies in teaching and progress reported at the previous inspection mean that, even though teaching is good now, it has not been so over time, particularly for the older pupils. Consequently, these pupils have a legacy of lower standards.
- The school's checks and the quality of work in books suggest that about three-quarters of Year 6 will reach or exceed the age-related expectation in reading and mathematics this year, and about two-thirds in writing. This is because, while these pupils are making good progress, they are coming from lower starting points.
- In Year 2, where there has been no legacy of underachievement, similar checks suggest higher attainment. Nine in every 10 are on track to reach the age-related expectation in reading and only slightly fewer in writing and mathematics. In addition, about half are expected to exceed this in reading and mathematics, and a quarter in writing. This follows the very strong results last year, when pupils were significantly above the national average in all three subjects.
- The proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was high in 2015 compared with the national picture, and is expected to remain so this year.
- The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils generally make similarly good progress to their peers, and some do better than this. The exception is those who also have special educational needs or disability. These pupils make good progress but from lower starting points.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those who speak English as an additional language, also do as well as their peers because they settle quickly and thrive in the inclusive and welcoming school community.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress overall from their individual starting points. This is because extra help is closely matched to their needs and provided by well-trained teaching assistants. The impact of the extra help is regularly reviewed to see that it is effective, and changed if it is not. Those with behavioural needs are given clear and consistent routines and appropriate support, but progress is slower for this group of pupils.
- The most able do well in reading and mathematics because they receive high-quality teaching. In mathematics, pupils say they are more interested because connections are made to daily life, so they see the purpose to what they are doing. In general class teaching of writing, however, the level of challenge these pupils receive does not routinely provide the harder work they need to reach their potential.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge typical for their age. They settle quickly because they are 'school ready', and make good progress. In 2015, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they entered Year 1 was above average. The school's checks on progress and inspection evidence suggest the proportion will be similar this year.
- Children's attitudes to learning are very good. They arrive each day full of curiosity to see what interesting activities staff have ready for them. They respond well to the positive culture in Reception and the emphasis on praising what has been achieved.
- Children behave well. They relate well to one another and willingly learn together, particularly with their close friends. They respond positively to staff.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Their clear understanding of right from wrong aids their learning. They are equally clear of their responsibility to others, for example organising a collection of groceries to deliver to a local food bank. They concentrate well and persevere with intriguing tasks. They respond positively to staff's high expectations that they develop autonomy, for example putting their own coats on to go outside.
- Children have a good understanding of their own safety. Staff teach them about road safety, taking them on walks to familiarise them with the neighbourhood and, for example, safe places to cross.
- All children, including the disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs or disability and the most able achieve well because a detailed and accurate assessment of each child's needs is used when planning activities.
- Teaching is good. Every opportunity is taken to consolidate and extend children's learning. For example, children are constantly reminded of links between letters and sounds, and encouraged to respond. During the inspection, children writing lists sounded unknown words to help their spelling. Staff are ambitious for children, introducing them to words such as 'symmetry', and encouraging children to use them too. Staff are vigilant so children are safe and well cared for.
- Children experience a very wide range of stimulating activities, both indoors and outside. They quickly become engrossed in exploring their interests, or following up on a task initiated by an adult. However, sometimes staff do not make clear to children what it is they are expected to learn from an activity, and learning is less focused.
- Staff work very closely with pre-school settings. For example, the early years leader provides advice and guidance to pre-school settings so that children are well prepared for Reception.
- Transition into Reception is very smooth. Good links mean that children are familiar with staff and their new classroom before they start. Each child is given a 'buddy' from Year 6, who will show them around the school and look after them in their first few weeks.
- The move from Reception to older classes, particularly as children will start in mixed-age classes with an older year group, can be daunting, especially as the curriculum is immediately much more formal. The school is aware of this and the faltering in pupils' progress that results at the start of Year 1. Changes are planned.
- Parents are fully involved in their children's education and development. Parents find information sessions, for example about early reading skills, very helpful.
- Leadership is very effective. The leader uses his strong knowledge and understanding of early years to ensure that the provision is good.

School details

Unique reference number	115173
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10011825

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	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Risby
Headteacher	Spencer Bragg
Telephone number	01375 672217
Website	www.stjosephscatholicprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@stjosephsprimary.thurrock.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 May 2014

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- Reception children are taught in one class. Elsewhere, each pair of year groups is taught in three mixed-age classes: Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Approximately one-quarter are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being African. One in 20 pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average, although a relatively high number have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classrooms, some jointly visited with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors observed pupils in other activities and as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, and governors. The inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 58 parents who responded to Parent View were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors took account of the questionnaire responses from 52 pupils.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information, including the school development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements and records for safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

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