

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Cherry Orchard, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 9AN

Inspection dates

8–9 November 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, academic standards have strengthened further. Whatever their starting points, pupils make good progress and reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Standards and rates of progress in reading are particularly strong. The school's work to inspire an interest in books is a notable strength.
- Pupils have many opportunities to participate, compete and succeed in different sports.
- Governance is ambitious and the headteacher is calm and effective in her role. She inspires confidence from others, leads by example and promotes the school's worthy values very well. Other key leaders also do a good job and have a clear understanding of the school's successes and areas for further development.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They look smart, attend regularly, work hard and want to succeed.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are kindly and good humoured. Older pupils readily help younger ones, and all respect the rules and live up to the school's high expectations of conduct and courtesy.
- Bullying of any sort is very rare. Pupils feel very safe in school.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and, in places, is superb. Teachers provide clear explanations and make sure that everyone works hard.
- Newly appointed staff show capability and promise and, with the support of school leaders, are succeeding in their roles.
- The early years provision is good, although some aspects need updating to give children a fuller range of learning opportunities.
- The majority of parents express very positive views about the school. They particularly value the caring ethos, the approachability of staff and the attention to considerate behaviour, welfare and academic standards.
- While progress overall is good, standards in writing are not as high as those seen in reading and mathematics, especially for some of the most able pupils.
- Teachers' day-to-day checks on pupils' learning in class are effective overall, but are carried out with more efficiency in some classes than in others.
- The school's recently implemented whole-school data-tracking system is still at an early stage of development. Currently, it does not give leaders a comprehensive overview of pupils' performance, particularly in writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing to be more in line with the higher standards seen in reading and mathematics, especially for the most able pupils, by:
 - making sure that teachers' checks on learning in lessons happen in a timely fashion so that no learning time is lost
 - refining the school's data-tracking system in order to give leaders and teachers a more comprehensive understanding of current progress and standards in writing
 - sharing the most effective practice in the school.
- Improve the early years provision by making sure that:
 - adults do not limit the development of children's independence and decision making by doing things for them that they could do for themselves
 - classroom activities build carefully on children's current knowledge and skills
 - routines for checking on children's learning, progress and acquisition of key skills are tightened up.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Good leadership has ensured that the school has strengthened its performance since the previous inspection. Teaching is consistently good, expectations are high, behaviour is excellent, and attention to pupils' personal development is outstanding. All of this contributes to a very positive climate for learning. Consequently, pupils make good progress and academic standards are above average.
- The headteacher has built up a capable staff team. Since her appointment in 2013, she has built further on the school's long-standing strengths and has brought about change and improvements where necessary. She is a highly visible presence in school and parents appreciate her approachability and the caring values that she and her team promote. She has a calm, yet firm, insistence that everyone should do their best and she makes sure that they do. Together with the deputy headteacher, she makes regular checks on teaching and learning in order to provide constructive encouragement, guidance or challenge, as necessary.
- Newly appointed staff, whether new to teaching or new to their current roles, are given effective support by the school's senior leaders. Newly qualified teachers clearly benefit from the guidance they receive and are doing well. Subject leaders are alert to the school's successes, but ambitious for pupils, especially the most able, to reach even higher standards. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the whole staff hierarchy, with everyone pulling their weight and bringing a particular skill to the team.
- Each week, there are many opportunities for pupils to enjoy success in a wide range of subjects. Leaders have also made sure that the school's values are woven throughout a broad curriculum. Qualities such as compassion, generosity and curiosity are exemplified by pupils' considerate behaviour, kindness and interest in their lessons and the well-being of others. In some instances, former pupils have written notes of thanks to the school explaining how the values and education experienced at St Joseph's set the foundations for their achievements in later life. This awareness of the worth of their primary education is evident in the way in which pupils approach all aspects of school life. There is no doubt that pupils leave St Joseph's Catholic Primary at the end of Year 6 well prepared for the years ahead.
- Participation and achievement in sport are notable strengths. In recent times, the range of sports on offer has widened, and participation rates in after-school sports clubs have risen. On top of this, an impressive array of trophies and shields is testimony to the pupils' successes in numerous competitive events, including cross-country running, football, hockey, netball, rugby and swimming. In part, this is due to the expert tuition that pupils receive, but pupils' dedication, commitment and tenacity have been factors too. Leaders' thoughtful use of the primary school sport funding has also helped to improve provision. Another specific fund, the pupil premium, is also used to good effect to make sure that targeted pupils make the most of school and do not fall behind with their learning.

- In response to the national changes to assessment, the school leadership has implemented a new system for tracking pupils' progress and standards. In the main, this is working well and staff understand what is expected from them and the pupils they teach. Currently, however, some of the record-keeping lacks precision, especially the recording of standards in writing. To a degree, this is due to staff getting to grips with the new measures, but it is also because the recording system itself is not sufficiently refined. Leaders are alert to this and are making improvements.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Governors are well informed, articulate and ambitious. They know the school is doing well and that standards have risen since the previous inspection. However, they also know what needs to be done to lift standards even higher. Governors talk with informed authority about any patterns they have noticed in pupils' achievement, and explain what the school has done in response. Minutes from meetings of the governing body record governors' many questions. It is clear that they see constructive challenge as an important part of their work to support the school and ensure the best deal for pupils.
- Governors have taken the initiative when seeking to improve their effectiveness. They have undertaken training with a local university and hosted training events at St Joseph's for other schools to attend. This has helped governors to keep up to date and has strengthened supportive networks with other organisations.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Everyone understands their duty of care.
- Parents, pupils and staff report that the school is a safe place to work and learn. All the required checks on staff and visitors are carried out and records are kept in good order. In the staffroom, key information about safety and safeguarding is readily available and staff know what to do should they have a concern about a child. When staff have had cause to follow up a concern, this has been done promptly and properly. On a day-to-day basis, first-aid treatment is administered swiftly when required, medicines are managed with care, and the school site is kept secure.
- Pupils are taught how to manage everyday risks, such as crossing the road and when using a computer, and display responsible and considerate behaviours. They trust the adults in school to help them and to listen to their concerns, should any arise. Indeed, the culture of listening to children and being attentive to their concerns, welfare and safety is well established in this school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching in all classes is good. In places, it is excellent.

- The teaching of reading is brilliantly effective; pupils are regularly required to read and analyse texts in purposeful and interesting ways. The joy that stories, poems and creative ideas can bring shines out from wall displays and also from pupils' faces when they read and discuss books.
- Teaching in other subjects is well pitched for different abilities, relevant and interesting. In mathematics, for example, lessons build carefully on pupils' earlier learning. Work in books shows that any mistakes or misconceptions are picked up when teachers check work and that pupils who clearly understand are pushed on further. Indeed, all work is marked regularly and with care. Pupils report that they find teachers' comments helpful and feel encouraged by the feedback and guidance they receive.
- At the top end of the school, teaching shows remarkable flair and imagination. In a Year 6 spelling practice session, for example, the teacher injected a series of attention-grabbing activities that enthused pupils and brought words to life in a good-humoured and highly memorable way. Work in books, school records and comments from the pupils show that this excellent practice in upper key stage 2 is typical.
- In all classes, pupils are usually conscientious. They are attentive to their teachers and get on with their work. They readily share ideas, contribute to classroom discussion and cooperate with one another. Expectations of classroom behaviour are clearly understood by all and relationships between adults and pupils are warm, respectful and good natured.
- Learning time in class is mostly used to best effect, but not always. On occasions, some pupils who have finished or could press on further are not picked up swiftly there and then. Similarly, some activities are slow to get going and learning time is lost. This is not commonplace, but it does happen and is a factor that limits some pupils' progress in writing.
- Teachers display good subject knowledge and classrooms are kept tidy and well organised.
- Pupils and parents report that homework is a regular feature of school life, with some wanting more and some wanting less. However, all are in agreement that it is relevant and useful and complements pupils' classroom learning. Some mathematics homework is completed online and pupils without access to a computer at home are able to complete this at the school site.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is a school where pupils' aptitudes, needs and personalities are known and understood. Pupils' talents are nurtured, and character and resilience are built. Pupils are taught to understand the link between effort and success, to do one's best and to be kind to others.

- Pupils display responsible and considerate attitudes because they are taught about the difference between right and wrong and the importance of respect for themselves and others. They understand how their actions affect others and are friendly, helpful and confident in all school situations. Pupils ask for help when they need it and are quick to offer it to others when they can. The school's values, which are displayed throughout the building and evident in day-to-day practice, are the guiding light behind these positive attitudes.
- Bullying of any sort is extremely rare and pupils who spoke with inspectors could not recall any instances of such poor behaviour. Nevertheless, pupils know how to recognise it and what to do if it should happen. They report that they feel safe at school and are confident that other pupils or adults at the school would help them if they had a problem.
- Pupils are encouraged to put their own ideas into action and to take responsibility, and they do. The elected school council has a voice in shaping aspects of school policy and all of the older pupils have special jobs to do, such as helping at lunchtime or acting as door monitors. They take these roles seriously and, in doing so, are helped to develop a sense of duty and commitment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The vast majority of pupils attend very regularly and on time. Lateness or absences without good reason are rare and overall attendance levels are above the national average. It is unusual for any pupil to turn up in anything other than full school uniform, which all pupils wear smartly. There have been no exclusions in recent times and school records show that any behaviour-related incidents, however minor, are followed up promptly and properly.
- Pupils' conduct is excellent. In class, they work hard, are attentive to their teachers and supportive of one another. Good manners and respectful attitudes are the norm and lessons run smoothly. When moving around the school site, pupils are typically courteous and acknowledge visitors and other adults with cheery greetings. There is some occasional over-enthusiasm to get outdoors at playtime, which can result in careless haste, but pupils are quick to calm down when reminded.
- Outside on the playground, the older pupils readily assist the younger ones and often help out with playground games. The youngest children wear fluorescent jackets so that they are easy to spot and the older ones are mindful of their whereabouts and take care not to knock or bump into them as they play. In addition, there is an established buddy system that pairs up younger and older pupils for some activities, such as reading, and these buddies 'look out' for each other at breaktimes.
- This outstanding behaviour draws frequent praise from visitors, parents and staff at places visited by pupils. School leaders regularly remind pupils about this excellent reputation and operate numerous incentives in school to promote and maintain these high standards.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Year after year, most pupils have reached above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. This good progress from broadly average starting points means they have left St Joseph's Catholic Primary well prepared for life and learning at secondary school.
- Standards in reading have been, and remain, high. Pupils of all ages can talk with informed enthusiasm about books, stories and authors. Indeed, a culture of reading for pleasure and as an integral part of learning across the curriculum is well established across the school. Pupils who are accomplished readers are inspired to read more widely and pupils who need help with aspects of reading get highly effective support. Just recently, the school won a county-wide reading competition, and displays throughout the school celebrate reading and literature. Achievement in reading for pupils of all abilities is a significant strength.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has also been strong over time, especially across key stage 2, leading to consistently above-average standards at the end of Year 6. Current pupils are clearly continuing to do well and pupils of all abilities tackle suitably demanding work with success.
- Progress in writing, while good overall, is not quite keeping pace with rates seen in reading and mathematics. In all classes, pupils complete a good range of written activities and are attentive to accuracy in spelling, punctuation and presentation. Pupils who need extra help get the support they require in order to keep up with their work. Consequently, standards in writing at the end of key stage 2 have been consistently above average overall. However, the most able pupils have not reached the same high standards that they have in reading and mathematics. Inspectors' checks on current pupils' work found that this remains the case for current pupils.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils at the school, and so any assessment information has been treated with caution as one pupil can have a huge effect on percentage figures. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, by and large, this group of pupils has done well, often making better progress and reaching higher standards than their non-disadvantaged peers nationally.
- As already noted, the most able pupils do exceptionally well in reading, successfully tackle some stretching work in mathematics, but could do a bit better in writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs receive good-quality teaching in class. On top of this, some extra tuition takes place in small groups when necessary. All of this provision is effective. Consequently, these pupils stay on track, feel success at school and, while progress rates vary due to the complexity of pupils' differing needs, all do well in a range of subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- Children's levels of knowledge and skills on entry to school vary from one year to the next. However, over time, most start with levels that are broadly typical for their age. In the main, they make good progress during their time in the early years and the proportions that reach a good level of development at the end of Reception Year have been above national figures for several years on the run. They acquire positive attitudes to school life and to one another during their first years at school and cope well when they move up to key stage 1.
- In both the Pre-school and Reception classes, children's behaviour is good and they are kept busy. They respond well to classroom routines and are keen to participate in the activities provided. Adults provide warm encouragement and treat children fairly and with good humour, while also making expectations clear. Consequently, children feel safe and secure, cooperate with others and enjoy school.
- The Pre-school class came under the school's governance in the summer term of 2016 and, while teaching is good overall, some aspects are in need of refreshment. Currently, routines for checking on children's progress during the Pre-school year are rather relaxed and some information about what children can or cannot do is overlooked. This results in children being presented with some activities that, while engaging and enjoyable, do not build carefully on their current levels of understanding. In a similar vein, sometimes adults do things for the children that they could do for themselves or miss opportunities to demonstrate a particular skill for children to learn. This restricts the development of children's independence and acquisition of skills. This is most evident in the Pre-school, but is a feature of some practice in the Reception class too. Leaders are alert to this and plans are already under way to bring about the necessary changes. This good leadership inspires confidence from parents and staff alike and ensures that any shortcomings in practice, however minor, are picked up quickly.
- Communication with home is a strength. Parents describe staff as approachable and friendly and parents who spoke with the lead inspector said that they were delighted with their choice of school. The school has organised workshops and meetings for parents to explain aspects of the curriculum and ways of supporting learning at home. These successful events have been well attended and parents value the time staff take to share information with them.

School details

Unique reference number	124357
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10000879

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tina Rowe
Headteacher	Deirdre McLeary
Telephone number	01543 263505
Website	www.stjosephslichfield.org.uk
Email address	office@st-josephs-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 January 2012

Information about this school

- St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School is a bit smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school offers early years provision for Pre-school- and Reception-age children. The Pre-school came under the school’s governance in the summer term of 2016.
- In 2015, the school met the government floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils’ progress and attainment in English and mathematics.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books, considered school test and assessment information and heard pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch- and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving around the school site and taking part in sports and music activities.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, senior and middle leaders, and governors. In addition, the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 56 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 34 written comments. The lead inspector noted these and also spoke with parents on the playground.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement, evaluations of the school's performance and numerous policy statements. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, training, the quality of teaching, external support, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Noble	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Orgill	Ofsted Inspector

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