

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Preston

Rigby Street, Preston, Lancashire PR1 5XL

## Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Although rapidly improving, the rates of progress being made by those pupils who are most able, including the most able disadvantaged, are not swift enough to help them reach the standards of which they are capable.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and does not always match the learning needs of the pupils.
- The teaching of phonics is not yet fully effective. Tasks do not always capture the pupils' interest.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make enough progress from their starting points.
- Although much has been done to address pupil absence, attendance is still currently below national expectations.
- Standards in writing are improving rapidly; however, outcomes in reading and mathematics are not as strong.
- Some other subject leaders are having too little influence on the quality of teaching within the subjects they lead.
- Many pupils carry a legacy of underachievement. Weaker teaching in the past has left many gaps in their skills and knowledge.

### The school has the following strengths

- Recent changes, driven by strong leaders and governors, are turning the school around quickly. Leaders have the confidence and trust of staff, pupils and parents. Leaders have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve further.
- Pupils are a delight to meet. They enjoy school, behave well and feel safe.
- There has been a huge increase in the numbers of White non-British pupils in the school. Leaders and staff are meeting their needs well, so that they are able to make rapid progress from low starting points.
- Pupils' personal and spiritual development is strong. They are well prepared to become valuable citizens of the future.
- The early years is the flagship for the school. It is at the very heart of the wider community.
- St Joseph's school has suffered from a turbulent past. It has had many changes in leadership and staff which led to poor outcomes for pupils. This is a rapidly changing picture.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the unevenness in teaching so that different groups of pupils make stronger gains in their learning, particularly in reading and mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that teachers deepen pupils' mathematical understanding and enable pupils to apply their knowledge to mathematical problems
  - tackling the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge due to poor teaching in the past
  - ensuring that phonics teaching allows pupils to make more rapid progress with their reading, particularly in lower key stage 1
  - providing a wider variety of books and encouraging pupils to read more frequently
  - challenging pupils so that they can build on prior learning from their individual starting points
  - ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make swifter progress so that they reach the standards they should for their age and starting points.
- Improve outcomes across a wider range of subjects by:
  - developing the skills of foundation subject leaders so that they can monitor the progress being made in their subject areas
  - ensuring that the improvements in writing are replicated in topic books.
- Improve levels of attendance by:
  - having more regular meetings with the family liaison officer, special educational needs coordinator and external agencies so that there is shared intelligence about the attendance of vulnerable children
  - having closer governor involvement in the monitoring of attendance
  - continuing to communicate with parents by fostering closer links with other agencies.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Many changes in leadership and staffing go a long way to explaining the barriers faced by the school in the past. The current improvement journey got off to a roaring start, despite leaders having to take the time to unearth and then untangle historical weaknesses. Since the beginning of this academic year, the effectiveness of the school has improved rapidly as a result of strong leadership.
- The new headteacher, with excellent support from the acting deputy and assistant headteacher, has renewed the passion for learning in staff and pupils alike. Much has been accomplished in a short space of time. Teaching is improving, pupils are enjoying their learning and their achievement is rising rapidly across most of the school. The progress made by leaders, staff and governors over the last year has secured the promise of future success.
- Staff have an appetite for change because the headteacher has skilfully brought everyone together as a united team. Morale is high. The majority of staff reflect the enthusiasm and energy of senior leaders because they have a part to play in the school's future successes. Everyone knows the direction of travel and all feel that they are on that journey.
- Effective systems to manage teachers' performance are raising expectations and ensuring that staff have the skills to teach well. A whole host of different training opportunities are refreshing teachers' performance and helping them to learn from each other and from good practice beyond the school. Examples of this are the work completed with other clusters of schools and the phonics training for early years and key stage 1 staff.
- Leaders use accurate plans to bring about changes in practice. These provide staff with a clear focus for monitoring activities which link to the school's priorities. Such activities support staff, rather than overwhelm them. The precision of leaders' monitoring and assessment helps teachers to understand what they need to do better and celebrate what they do well.
- Middle leadership was a weakness at the last inspection. This has improved. The recent restructure of responsibilities has allowed the English leader to make strong progress in the last term. Pupils' progress in writing is improving, so the current focus is on providing more reading opportunities across the school. The English leader is using the expert guidance from local cluster groups and local authority advisers effectively to implement further changes in reading and writing. The mathematics leader is being ably supported by the headteacher so that outcomes in this subject continue to improve.
- Some subject leaders are already starting to have a positive influence on the learning in their subject areas, such as in computing and art. Subject leaders are given targeted training opportunities so that they can take more responsibility for pupils' progress in their subjects.
- Leaders are determined that pupils' academic success is matched by their social and emotional development. The systems to support pupils' wider needs have been overhauled. The nurture group is a strong example. The team charged with ensuring

that pupils are safe, secure and well behaved is working closely with parents to encourage improved attendance.

- A range of strategies are in place to help pupils overcome barriers in their learning. Currently, over half the pupils at the school speak English as an additional language, so leaders have employed staff who are able to speak a range of languages to support parents and pupils alike. There are translations of newsletters and school policies readily available and the new website is very easy to navigate.
- Leaders and staff work together to review behaviour policy and record behaviour incidents so that they are able to identify patterns of behaviour and the impact on pupils' work. Ongoing work to ensure that the level of challenge in lessons meets individual learning needs is encouraging pupils to stay on tasks for longer periods.
- Additional funding provided by the government to support disadvantaged pupils is making a tangible difference to the progress of most of these pupils. The new leaders, supported by a keener interest from the governing body, regularly review the extra support available to these pupils. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress. Additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities is not securing good progress for them.
- The large numbers of White non-English-speaking pupils now account for half of the school population and receive additional tuition in basic skills. Leaders have employed additional adults to translate for pupils and their parents where possible.
- The physical education and sports premium has literally revolutionised the promotion and enjoyment of physical activity. An empty building has been dragged back into service, providing a perfect sports hall facility. A newly appointed sports coach delivers a range of clubs during lunchtime and after school, which means that pupils are now able to take part in competitive sports with other schools in the region. The teams are making their mark. As one pupil said, 'We have come from nowhere, and now we are winning!'
- The revised curriculum covers a wide variety of topics. Leaders have garnered pupils' interests to ensure that the curriculum is engaging and fun. As a result, pupils are fully engaged in their learning, with many making rapid progress from their very low starting points.
- A wide range of enrichment activities add stimulation to the curriculum. Visits outside of school coupled with visitors to the school are strengthening pupils' enjoyment and knowledge. Furthermore, this work, along with the strong focus on Catholic values, is underpinning pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils are gaining the skills, values and attributes to make a positive contribution to modern society. Pupils have respect for other cultures and different faiths.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governance of St Joseph's school is now good.
- An external review of governance since the last inspection has re-energised governors. It has helped them to see where they went wrong in the past. Due to a number of new recruits, roles and responsibilities are once again under review. All of this is under the watchful eye of the new chair of governors who provides an excellent role model for

her colleagues.

- Governors now know what questions to ask about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and they provide appropriate challenge to hold leaders to account.
- Governors have provided unwavering support to senior leaders over staffing issues. Difficult decisions have not been shirked. Their much-improved understanding of performance information means that they have a better understanding of how additional government funding is being used to close achievement gaps. Governors have their sights set on the future. They are playing a key role in setting the strategic direction of the school.
- Governors have come a long way. They now understand their statutory responsibilities, such as keeping the website up to date and their role in safeguarding and the monitoring of attendance.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Recent training means that staff know how to spot early signs that pupils may be at risk and they know how to act on any concerns. School records show that any issues are followed through thoroughly. Good use is made of external services to support vulnerable pupils and their families. The weekly 'stay and play' parent group is a perfect example of this. Professionals mingle with parents and their children who are often new to this country, signposting them to external services that may provide support.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- In most classes, pupils are flourishing, but there are others where they do not make such good progress. This is linked to changes in staffing which have delayed a consistent approach to teaching and progress. As a result, the overall quality of teaching is variable across years and subjects.
- Pupils' learning is not at its best when activities lack structure or fail to build on what pupils already know and can do. In other words, when lessons are not pitched correctly to meet their learning needs, pupils can sometimes become bored and disruptive.
- The teaching of mathematics is variable. It has improved, but still has a way to go to ensure that pupils are competent mathematicians. Positive change is showing in the breadth of mathematical topics being taught; nonetheless, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to make links between different mathematical concepts or to deepen their learning by solving problems.
- In many classes, the teaching assistants are used to best effect. They provide strong support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. These pupils receive targeted support to improve their basic skills, as they are often well behind their age-related expectations.
- Where pupils lack basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, most teachers provide numerous opportunities to plug the gaps in their knowledge. However, despite making good progress, these pupils are still catching up with their peers.
- Most teachers support pupils' learning well through the productive and warm

relationships they foster. Good use of humour and praise paves the way for pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are increasingly keen to throw themselves into their learning opportunities because teachers strive to make activities fun and relevant.

- There is a real focus on reading throughout the school. Leaders have invested heavily in a wide range of reading materials of different genres to appeal to all tastes. Other adults, including governors, visit school regularly to listen to readers, and guided reading now forms an important part of the curriculum. Reading corners in most classrooms provide a cosy place for pupils to read. However, these should be well supervised so that they are used for the purposes intended.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The display in the entrance hall shows a variety of colourful fish all swimming in the same direction. This sums up the atmosphere in the school successfully, as it confirms what pupils say about everyone being different but all pulling in the same direction. Children take pride in their school and are keen to contribute to its success. As one pupil said, 'The picture represents the school. We are all different but now we are swimming together as a team in the same direction.'
- St Joseph's is putting the foundation in place for pupils to make sensible choices and to reap the benefits of a healthy, safe and successful life. Pupils know which strategies to use to recognise unwanted adult attention and to keep themselves safe from abuse and grooming. They also understand the harm that smoking, drugs and alcohol can cause.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They know who to turn to in the school if they have concerns or anxieties. Bullying is rare, but when it does occur pupils say that this is dealt with promptly.
- The newly appointed school councillors take their responsibilities very seriously; however, their role is still developing. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the range of jobs they would like to undertake in the future, such as providing counselling for their peers.
- Pupils at St Joseph's know the harm that unkind remarks about skin colour, sexuality, faith or learning difficulties can cause. Consequently, incidents of racist and homophobic language are now a rarity. One astute pupil said, 'Nobody stands out as being different in this school. We are all different, so it makes us all the same.'

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils behave well around the school. Wide smiles, good manners and courteous behaviour greet visitors and make for a warm welcome at St Joseph's. Good behaviour is recognised and rewarded and is respected by pupils. However, in a small number of classrooms, disruptive behaviour prevents pupils from learning effectively.
- Pupils agree that behaviour is improving. They think that it is mostly good, apart from

sometimes in the classroom. One pupil put it well: 'Teachers are much more strict now, but that makes us feel safe because we know where stand.' However, there are some pupils who display unacceptable behaviour from time to time.

- Parents spoken to and those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, feel overwhelmingly that pupils are safe and behave well, and that bullying is dealt with effectively. Despite that, there is still a small minority of pupils and parents who feel that bullying is still a cause for concern. Leaders treat these concerns seriously.
- A family liaison worker works alongside leaders to improve attendance. Good attendance is celebrated on the website and in the newsletters. Pupils know what the attendance target is, and the fact that they are creeping closer to it. Although attendance is improving, it remains below the national average.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- In each key stage, attainment and progress vary across years and subjects due to the variability in teaching. Overall progress therefore requires improvement. However, there is an improving picture with predictions for reading, writing and mathematics all in line with national averages.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make good progress from their starting points.
- When pupils write in their topic books, they tend to leave their higher standards of grammar, spelling, punctuation and presentation behind when they are not working in their English writing books.
- Work in pupils' books and the school's performance information show that pupils' achievement is moving in the right direction and is strengthening over time. Rapidly improving standards for those pupils currently at the school, particularly in Reception, Year 2 and Year 6, are a telltale sign that St Joseph's is on the road to recovery.
- School performance information shows that attainment in mathematics is below national expectations and pupils' books confirm that pupils are not gaining sufficient depth in their mathematical learning through problem-solving. They are, however, becoming more competent in working out calculations due to a new whole-school approach to calculations.
- The learning needs of the rapidly growing numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language are now being tackled. Leaders have a better understanding of what needs to be done to best meet their needs. This is showing signs of success, with these groups beginning to make stronger progress. The most able are not yet making the gains that they should. Where a number of pupils are able to build from their stronger starting points, there is no stopping them as they fly through the challenges as they are presented.
- Leaders made writing the main focus for improvement last year. As a result, pupils made enough progress to meet national expectations for progress. This newfound enthusiasm for learning and their improved standards mean that pupils are far better equipped to use their writing skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- In the past, many of the girls have performed less well than the boys across all



subjects. This is because many of the new arrivals who speak English as an additional language are girls. Targeted support for this large group has meant that the difference in progress between White non-English-speaking pupils and others is diminishing. Numbers of new arrivals have grown from 16% to 47% in just one year.

- The proportion of pupils who pass the Year 1 phonics check has been below average for a number of years. Additional staff have been recruited to teach phonics. As a result, early reading skills are developing well, which enables pupils to enjoy reading for pleasure in readiness for key stage 2. However, there is still room for improvement in the teaching of phonics for younger pupils.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Opening the doors to Nursery and Reception classrooms unveils a hive of purposeful activity and a cauldron of excitement. Children are happy, safe and captivated by the array of activities on offer, both indoors and outside. Children show concentration, curiosity and a willingness to try their best whether or not an adult is working with them.
- Strong leadership has taken the early years from strength to strength. Newly appointed adults work in tandem, making sure that everyone is crystal clear about their role in supporting learning. Adults enjoy being in this area of the school as much as the children. Their enthusiasm, warm manner and high expectations create a secure, nurturing and productive environment in which children thrive. All welfare and safeguarding requirements are met.
- With all children actively involved in their learning, they are too preoccupied to even think about behaving badly. As a result, there is a harmonious atmosphere where children learn to share and explore together.
- Teaching is effective. Information about children's progress is gathered carefully and used effectively to identify the next steps for each individual. Teaching, either through whole-class, small-group or individual work, is then carefully shaped to plug any gaps. The indoor learning and the outdoor area are well organised to meet children's interests as well as promoting their skills and knowledge across all areas of learning. A strong focus on basic skills means that every opportunity is taken to promote early reading, writing and mathematics. For example, children pouring liquids on a gingerbread man were timing and recording how long it took the biscuit to disintegrate.
- There is a real, focused energy on speaking and listening, with nearly half the class speaking English as an additional language. A speech and language professional works alongside teachers, which helps to ensure that pupils' needs are being met.
- Increasing opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning are leading to positive partnerships. Parents are able to 'stay and play' in classrooms, attend workshops and keep track of their children's progress.
- Pupils in the early years are doing better and better year on year. Not so long ago, very few pupils made the levels of attainment expected of them. More recently, the number of pupils reaching a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average. This shows that the majority of pupils made considerable progress from their low starting points.



## School details

Unique reference number	119430
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10024112

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

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	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emma McGrath
Headteacher	Catherine Monaghan
Telephone number	01772 796112
Website	<a href="http://www.sjps.lancs.sch.uk">www.sjps.lancs.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@sjps.lancs.sch.uk">admin@sjps.lancs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is larger than an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is growing, as is the number of White pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's floor standards for 2015/16. These are the minimum standards and rates of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils at key stage 2.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant numbers of staffing changes and a change to the leadership structure. A new headteacher took up post in September 2016. There is also a seconded assistant headteacher who takes the lead for English across the school.

- Leaders appointed five new teaching staff this academic year.
- A review of governance was completed after the previous inspection. It resulted in the appointment of a new chair of the governing body.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited each classroom to observe teaching and pupils' learning. Seven observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at playtimes. They met formally with three groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, middle leaders, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of school performance information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books.
- Inspectors looked at a number of anonymised case studies, performance management reviews and a wide range of reviewed policies.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a small group of parents at the start of the school day. They also considered the many responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and the additional paper questionnaires which had been translated from Polish into English for the purposes of this exercise. This included 18 free text comments.

## Inspection team

Maggie Parker, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sheila O'Keeffe	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Platt	Ofsted Inspector

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