

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Bridgwater

Park Avenue, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 7EE

Inspection dates

25–26 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Progress in key stage 2 is not rapid enough for pupils to reach the expected standards required nationally.
- The progress pupils have made in mathematics, especially for girls, has not been consistently good. By the time they reached the end of Year 6, not enough pupils achieved the standards of which they were capable.
- The school's self-evaluation and development plan are not rigorous enough in targeting key areas for improvement, specifically for key groups of pupils.
- Teaching is too variable across the school because there is inconsistency in the use of the agreed marking policy and the deployment of teaching assistants. This hinders the progress that pupils make.
- Teachers do not consistently use accurate assessments of what pupils can do to plan learning at the appropriate level for different pupils. Middle-ability pupils and the most able pupils do not receive the challenge they need to deepen their understanding, knowledge and skills.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account well enough or check how effective leaders' actions are in raising standards.
- Attendance in 2016 was below the national average. Persistent absence was high for specific groups of pupils, although there have been significant improvements this year.
- Middle leaders, new to post, do not have sufficient clarity about the role they should play in whole-school improvement. They do not have clear priorities based on accurate use of reliable information. It is too early to see the impact of their improvement work.

The school has the following strengths

- The children get off to a good start in their school life because they have good-quality experiences in the early years, which ensures they progress well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are currently making good progress.
- Pupils have significant opportunities to learn about moral issues, and other cultures and faiths. The school's Catholic ethos and values underpin pupils' development.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they enjoy positive relationships with caring staff. Delightful, friendly and well-behaved pupils are an asset to the school community.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics and eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by:
 - providing greater challenge for the most able pupils
 - making sure that more opportunities are provided for pupils to explain their reasoning across the curriculum
 - helping pupils, especially the middle-attaining pupils, to apply their learning and skills to deepen and extend their understanding, especially in mathematics
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are appropriately deployed in classrooms and that they have the skills and knowledge to support pupils' learning effectively
 - ensuring that assessment is accurate and moderated robustly and that feedback is consistent with the school policy.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - improving school evaluation systems to demonstrate rigour and systematic monitoring of the progress of key groups
 - developing the role of subject leaders so they are able to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement across subjects
 - ensuring that governors develop a rigorous system, that checks regularly how effective leaders' actions are in raising standards and holding teachers to account
 - strengthening the work of leaders, staff and governors so that they work together better and share fully in the drive to improve the school
 - making sure that leaders plan changes well and allow enough time for initiatives to show impact before making further refinements.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, changes in leadership, governance and staffing have resulted in a period of instability for the school. The current interim headteacher has only been in post since February 2017, following the secondment of the substantive headteacher. There has been an insufficient focus on the achievement of groups of pupils and weak guidance for teachers. Consequently, standards have declined.
- Senior leaders do not manage all changes in the school well. At times, variable quality of communication among senior leaders, staff and governors holds the school back from making the best use of everyone's efforts to develop St Joseph's. This slows the pace of improvement.
- Outcomes and provision for pupils have not remained consistently good. However, new leaders have acted recently to ensure that current pupils are making more progress.
- Leaders challenge and support staff well through a range of monitoring activities. Staff value additional guidance from training opportunities and specialist advisers, including the local leader of education. Consequently, subject leaders for English and mathematics now have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities. Staff recognise that although training is beginning to have an impact on outcomes, they need to develop their roles further to have a stronger impact on the quality of teaching and the raising of standards.
- There is too little impact of the work of middle leaders, especially in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics. For some middle leaders, this is because they are newly appointed and it is too soon to see the impact of their work.
- The recently appointed interim headteacher has worked tirelessly to improve teaching, clarify policies and ensure that key school functions are fit for purpose. Some aspects of this work have required difficult decisions in a short timeframe. Much has been put in place to improve teaching since February 2017. Senior leaders are taking actions to bring about improvement, although it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work.
- Recent improvements to the curriculum mean that pupils have more opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects. The curriculum is providing pupils with opportunities to study exciting topics, especially using the school's 'Learning Loops' which help pupils know what they need to achieve. The curriculum is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Pupils enjoy attending the range of clubs, which enhances the curriculum well. However, an overemphasis on pupils' writing skills sometimes overshadows the depth of subject-specific learning in subjects such as history, geography and science.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to diminish the difference between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. Additional support is carefully planned to meet pupils' next steps and is regularly reviewed. For example, funding is used to train staff in supporting pupils' emotional health and well-being. The progress of some disadvantaged pupils is improving. A broad range of strategies is in place to help pupils overcome any barriers that may stop them from growing into valuable citizens of the future.

- The primary sport premium is used effectively to increase rates of participation through employing specialist coaches to train staff, providing greater participation in organised sports competitions and a wider range of after-school clubs.
- Leaders give much attention to enhancing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. As a result, the curriculum prepares pupils successfully for life in the diverse world of modern Britain. The school's Catholic ethos is evident throughout the work of the school. Leaders, staff and governors are deeply committed to making sure that pupils understand their faith and religious heritage. Pupils learn to respect the faiths of other people.
- The special educational needs coordinator, who took up the role in 2015, has conducted a thorough audit of needs and has established new procedures to identify pupils requiring additional support. She effectively manages the provision of education for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' work shows that those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making effective progress in their learning because of the well-managed support they receive. The extra funding for these pupils is used to good effect.
- Leaders have improved procedures for managing the performance of teachers and making pay decisions. Targets are linked more closely to outcomes for pupils.

Governance of the school

- Monitoring activities undertaken by governors lack precision. Weaknesses identified are not pursued swiftly enough by governors. Governors' challenge is not bringing about rapid improvement. More recently, governors are asking challenging questions of school leaders about pupils' achievement in order to check on improvement.
- Governors are fulfilling their statutory duties. They keep a close eye on school finances and on safeguarding. They audit the single central record of recruitment checks on a termly basis. Governors are committed and supportive, but they do not hold leaders to account well enough and this has contributed to weak teacher performance.
- Governors have not kept to their own timetable for the review of the school's key policies. Although they check how effective leaders' actions are in raising standards across the school, this does not include ensuring rigorous identification of the needs of groups of pupils in the challenge to raise standards.
- Governors are aware of how the pupil premium and sports funding is being spent and have good knowledge about its impact on raising standards for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All pupils who inspectors asked said that they feel safe at school. They enjoy learning to keep themselves safe, for example about how they should use social media and the internet.
- Staff give much attention to making sure that the school premises are secure.

- Staff are patient, caring and listen well to pupils' views. Consequently, pupils feel confident in sharing any concerns they may have.
- Leaders, staff and governors undertake regular training about safeguarding. Up-to-date policies guide their work clearly. Leaders share new government guidance about safeguarding fully with staff and governors.
- Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough. Leaders record and review information fully and regularly.
- Leaders are well informed about key local risks to families and use this knowledge to keep a close check on information about pupils and parents.
- The school has effective relationships with outside professionals and is active in referring any concerns that may place children at risk, and in following up actions to ensure that pupils remain safe. Leaders work well with parents and a variety of external agencies when needs arise to ensure that the pupils remain safe and well supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching remains too inconsistent in key stages 1 and 2 despite recent initiatives. Pupils' books show that rates of progress remain too variable because of this.
- Some staff do not give enough attention to challenging and deepening the learning of the most able pupils. This is slowing pupils' progress. In mathematics, and across the wider curriculum, pupils have too few opportunities to explain their reasoning on how they approach solving problems. This is hindering their opportunities to attain the higher standards.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils, including the most able, are not high enough. Too often, learning activities do not demand enough of pupils. During visits to classrooms, inspectors noted that the most able have to wait too long before they can move to a higher challenge that stretches their thinking. This slows down pupils' progress.
- Some teaching assistants are deployed thoughtfully in activities and their skills make a big difference to the quality of pupils' learning. Others do not have enough influence on pupils' learning. Their understanding of what pupils should achieve for their age is underdeveloped.
- The teaching of phonics is effective at key stage 1. This is because staff have a secure knowledge of phonics. The teaching of phonics has been re-organised to meet the needs of different ages and aptitudes of pupils. Younger pupils receive good support in the reading process and weaker readers are keen to show how well they can sound out unfamiliar words.
- The teaching of mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 is improving steadily. Staff skills and confidence are growing through regular training and team discussions. Pupils particularly enjoy mathematics when staff provide them with challenging problem solving. However, the pitching of some activities is not appropriate for different groups. Work can be overly repetitive for the most able or too hard for the least able.

- The teaching of writing has improved and is now a strength of the school. Successful examples of pupils' writing in displays and in English and topic books demonstrate this improvement. Pupils enjoy writing and know how to share their ideas with different audiences. Presentation of work on display is good, though this is not the same in their writing books. Leaders' careful review of why spelling, punctuation and grammar were weaker in 2016 and their actions to help staff are beginning to improve the quality of teaching.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics there are varying degrees of success. Teachers' desire to improve pupils' writing skills means that some tend to use history, geography and science lessons as a further opportunity to practise writing skills as opposed to the specific-subject skills.
- Without exception, teachers are highly skilled in forging positive relationships. Their warm and nurturing manner underpins the calm, friendly and harmonious atmosphere across the school.
- Teachers do not always check sharply on pupils' understanding before moving them on in their learning. Pupils are left unclear about their learning, for example when simplifying fractions or when applying more advanced forms of punctuation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy attending lessons because they say that teachers and learning support assistants usually help them to understand their learning in lessons. Pupils are confident and inquisitive.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and look after themselves. Pupils are confident about staying safe while online and in the local community.
- Pupils are supported well to become good citizens. They have a good understanding of democracy and the role of the monarchy because teachers promote British values effectively.
- Pupils' pride in their work is consistent. The standard of presentation of pupils' work on display in corridors is of a high quality, particularly in English and mathematics. This is developing well in other subjects.
- A number of parents say that the school does not respond well to concerns they raise. Leaders recognise that still more needs doing to further improve communication with parents and capitalise on parents' desire to support their children's learning at home. Almost all parents report that their children are happy to come to school and that they are well cared for and safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Pupils are very polite and courteous to adults and each other, showing respect and consideration. They welcome visitors and are keen to engage in conversations about their school and work. They are confident and articulate.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, and consequently attendance and punctuality are generally good for most groups of pupils. The school gives support to the small number of children whose attendance is not as good as it should be. Leaders work closely with parents and the education welfare officer to remove barriers to pupils' regular attendance at school. This has resulted in improved attendance.
- The special educational needs coordinator follows up on concerns or incidents, recording them in the relevant log. Comprehensive records of engagement with external support for pupils are rigorous and secure.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of all types of bullying and say it is rare. They are confident that if any bullying or poor behaviour does occur, adults will rapidly take action to deal with it. A small minority of pupils share the concerns of their parents about the changes of staff and leadership in the school.
- Some pupils' attitudes to learning are not yet consistently good. This is because of the varying quality of teaching and the less effective relationships that a minority of teachers have with their class.
- The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, report that behaviour is good in the school. However, some parents raised concerns about behaviour. The school recognises that it must continue the good work that it is doing to ensure that improvements are built on further.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- As a result of inconsistent teaching across the school, pupils have not made sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics across key stages 1 and 2, particularly in 2016. Assessment for current pupils, however, shows a significant increase in the proportions of pupils in all cohorts who are reaching, or exceeding, standards expected for their age.
- In 2016, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in these subjects is, however, too variable across the school. Progress is strongest in Year 5 for reading and mathematics.
- Last year, the progress of Year 6 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was too low in mathematics. Current pupils with these needs and/or disabilities are showing good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is the result of leaders acting swiftly to meet their learning needs.
- Too many pupils, including the most able, are not making the progress they are capable of in reading, writing and mathematics. Learning activities for pupils working within the expected standard in these subjects do not always plan for greater challenge. Additionally, there is lack of challenge for the most able pupils so they do not achieve their full potential in learning at greater depth.
- Pupils' mathematics books indicate that there are now more opportunities for pupils to solve problems, which encourage them to think hard, use their knowledge of number and explain their answers. Pupils are beginning to enjoy the demands of this new way

of working. This is helping to lift their confidence and competence as young mathematicians.

- There are signs of a stronger picture emerging for younger pupils. More children are starting Year 1 ready to learn. In turn, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard by the end of Year 2 was just above the 2016 national average. These improvements are securing firm foundations on which to build.
- In 2016, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check was just above the national average but for disadvantaged pupils it was below average. This year, more pupils are likely to meet the expected standard in phonics, including the disadvantaged pupils. This is because teachers are now more confident in teaching phonics, which enables them to build on the good start children make in the early years.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make the same progress as others in the school.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Those disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are showing better progress.
- In 2016, boys did less well than girls in reading and writing. Current assessment information shows that this pattern is reversing quickly. Pupils' books show that boys share the same passion for writing as girls and they are making the same gains in their learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the Reception class with skills that are below those expected for their age in the areas of reading, writing, number and understanding of the world. Children from all groups, including the small numbers of disadvantaged children or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points. This is because of the quality of care and teaching they receive. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has remained about the national average for the last two years and is improving this year. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- The teacher responsible for the early years provides strong leadership. A stimulating well-organised environment from which the children benefit and develop well is the result of the leader's clear understanding of children's needs.
- Teaching in the early years is effective. This is because the leader of the early years is knowledgeable and supportive. Teachers and learning support assistants know the children well and have good knowledge of how young children learn best. They ensure that assessments are accurate and that their planning reflects the needs of the children from their different starting points.
- Adults working in the early years have established good partnerships with parents. Consequently, parents are confident that staff will act quickly to deal with any concerns about their child's progress. However, the early years leader is currently reviewing the methods of communicating children's successes with parents.

- Children are clearly secure in the class routines. Children use equipment with a good degree of confidence, and are eager to chat with inspectors about what they are doing. They are proud to say what type of learner they are, such as a 'go for it gorilla'. They also know what they want to be next, such as an 'exploring elephant'. Two children were observed working diligently, totally engrossed in a writing task, while two other children were organising a puppet show for other children.
- Teachers are quick to identify children who need additional support, and seek support from other professionals including the special educational needs coordinator to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable children are met.
- Teachers make effective use of both indoor and outdoor space to provide stimulating and focused activities, especially linked to writing activities. These activities capture children's interest and provide both excitement and valuable learning. Adults' good use of questioning and links between different subjects ensure that children do not miss opportunities to learn.
- Adults consistently demonstrate respect and courtesy to children, who copy this with enthusiasm. Children play well together and develop their inquisitiveness and social skills effectively to become eager learners because of adults' encouragement.
- Well-trained and vigilant staff keep children safe. Leaders ensure that they meet all welfare requirements for the children.

School details

Unique reference number	123846
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10005559

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Jarvis
Headteacher	Richard Simmonds
Telephone number	01278 422786
Website	https://slp5.somerset.org.uk/webs/stjosephprimaryschool/SitePages/Home.aspx
Email address	Sch.059@educ.somerset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2012

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school.
- Pupils are taught in single-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well below the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities receiving school support is well below average, and there are a well below average number of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the impact of pupil premium on its website.
- The school provides a breakfast club, and after-school clubs.
- The school was below the government's current floor standards for 2016, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in Year 6.
- The school has been supported by a local leader of education, from Westover Green Community School. Her initial role was to support the headteacher in leadership and management development, especially for middle leadership.
- After a period of being an executive headteacher of her own school and one other, the substantive headteacher, who was appointed after the previous inspection, was seconded to become executive headteacher of two other Catholic schools in the diocese. The current headteacher was appointed as interim headteacher in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited most classrooms to observe teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour.
- They observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play. Inspectors met formally with two groups of pupils and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, a local leader of education and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of school information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books.
- Inspectors talked to parents at the start of the school day. They also took account of the 43 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the 31 free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 35 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- One Ofsted inspector visited the school on 25 May 2017 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. This inspection was converted to a section 5 inspection under the same Act of Parliament and two other inspectors joined the team on 26 May 2017.

Inspection team

Terry Mortimer, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Berry	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bragg	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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