

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Exmouth

Regents Gate, Exmouth, Devon EX8 1TA

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

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

- The acting headteacher has brought consistent and effective leadership to the school. Teaching is good and pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics. Standards have been above the national average at both key stages 1 and 2 for the last two years.
- Pupils are confident readers. They acquire phonic skills well. The most able pupils make strong progress in reading. A significant proportion of pupils reach the higher standard at the end of both key stages.
- Pupils are enthusiastic writers. However, a legacy of weaker handwriting, spelling and punctuation limits pupils' ability to reach the higher standard. Pupils do not have sufficient guidance on how to be successful with their writing or how to improve their work.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress. They are well supported in lessons and in additional learning programmes.
- Pupils behave well in class and are keen learners. Most work is presented well, but teachers do not challenge pupils consistently to present their work in topic books carefully.
- All staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe.
- In most cases, teachers present the pupils' learning clearly. Pupils begin their tasks confidently and use their time well in lessons.
- Pupils make good progress in music and physical education. They gain age-appropriate scientific knowledge, but their skills of scientific enquiry are less secure.
- The headteacher and middle leaders have an accurate understanding of where the school should continue to improve. However, evidence of pupils' progress in their work is not used sharply enough to guide leaders' plans for further improvement.
- Governors support and challenge leaders effectively, and use additional funding well. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Children make a successful start to their education in early years. However, teachers do not put sufficient emphasis on the accurate formation of letters. This limits the most able children from achieving higher standards in writing.
- Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust has supported leaders and guided the school's improvement effectively.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They value the wide learning experiences that their children have.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management from all leaders, including the leader for early years, by more sharply using information from pupils' work to check the effectiveness of their actions and inform their plans for continued improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by teachers:
 - giving pupils, and children in early years, clear guidance about the expectations and next steps for their writing, so that more reach the higher standard
 - improving pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation
 - having consistently high expectations of pupils' presentation across all their work
 - developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry in line with expectations for their age.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The acting headteacher provides clear, consistent and effective leadership. She has gained the respect of parents, pupils and staff. There is a team of increasingly effective middle leaders who have joined her in improving teaching and continuing the development of the school.
- Leaders have a mostly accurate picture of the school's effectiveness and a well-founded plan to take the school forward. As a team, leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' work. However, they are not currently taking sufficient account of the information gained from pupils' work. Closer examination of pupils' writing shows that more urgent action should be taken to overcome gaps in pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting, in order to raise standards.
- Teachers benefit from leaders coaching and supporting them to improve their teaching. Leaders encourage teachers to work together to share the best practice across the school. This high-quality professional development is valued by staff and has secured the overall good quality of teaching and learning in the school.
- Leaders work well professionally with other schools in the local area and the trust. This has strengthened the capacity of the school to bring about improvement quickly. The school is currently involved in a national writing project in order to develop the teaching of writing. This is timely, given the weaknesses identified in standards in spelling, handwriting and punctuation. Leaders have successfully implemented well-planned programmes for teaching mathematics and reading. As a result, standards in these subjects have risen.
- Pupils now learn in single-aged classes. They have well-planned learning opportunities across the full range of subjects. Their learning is enriched by wide opportunities to learn out of school. The curriculum for music and physical education is broad and well supported by specialist teaching.
- The curriculum and the values of the school contribute strongly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. These also foster pupils' understanding of important values, for example respect. Pupils learn important facts about different religions. They are reflective about how their lives are safer and their opportunities wider than for children in some other parts of the world. Pupils are keen to take responsibility, for example as school librarians. Members of the school council said that they feel they make a difference to the school.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is used well to develop pupils' opportunities to take part in different sports and get 'fit for their future'. The school's resources have been improved, so that pupils' full participation in lessons is enhanced. Leaders have provided additional resources for the playground, which have increased the pupils' activity levels at lunchtime.
- The school is highly inclusive, and as teaching and leadership have developed, so too has the school's capacity to secure the good progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Additional funding is well used and teachers are confident to make adaptations to learning, so that all achieve well. Leaders' commitment to equality of

opportunity is demonstrated through inclusive teaching and good outcomes for all groups of pupils, except in aspects of writing.

- There is a very small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school, and leaders are strongly committed to ensuring that they achieve well. Leaders make frequent checks on pupils' progress. Funding has been used effectively to provide additional teaching programmes. Good class teaching has ensured that disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Parents who shared their views during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly praised the leadership of the school, teaching and the wide opportunities their children are given. A parent typically expressed this as, 'My children are exposed to an exciting and varied curriculum to ensure their minds are broadened and stimulated.'

Governance of the school

- Governors have given the school effective support to bring about improvements over the past two years. They have an accurate view of the school's priorities for improvement in the school development plan.
- Governors use reports by the acting headteacher and other leaders to monitor the progress of pupils, in particular those who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Governors also make regular visits to check the progress of the school improvement plan. For example, they have recently seen pupils working in class and reviewed the effectiveness of the school's priority to support pupils as confident learners.
- Governors take full advantage of the development opportunities provided by the multi-academy trust so they are well placed to continue to support the school. They value the good relationship with the trust and the benefits it has brought to the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Procedures and policies are effective and well understood by staff. Staff know pupils well and are vigilant for their safety. Regular training has built staff confidence to use the school's systems to promptly refer any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders are equally confident to seek help for families from a range of agencies should they have concerns about pupils' safety.
- All checks are made when staff are recruited. Governors support leaders with safeguarding, and external audits are carried out and reviewed to ensure that guidance is followed.
- Pupils were unanimous in saying that they felt safe and could describe many ways in which the school keeps them safe. Parents who responded to Parent View overwhelmingly agreed about their children's safety in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have strengthened teaching in all aspects of the curriculum since the previous inspection and teaching is now good. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well. They use classroom displays and resources to prompt and guide pupils in their learning. Leaders have developed the consistency of teachers' practice across the school, so that pupils are supported by knowing what is expected of them in most aspects of learning.
- In most cases, teachers present learning clearly and confidently and pupils begin tasks promptly because they know what to do. For example, Year 4 pupils produced accurately drawn bar graphs to record data they had collected. The teacher held their interest as she explicitly explained how to measure and number the axes and explored possible errors. Pupils were eager to begin work and were rightly proud of their final graphs.
- Overall, the teaching of mathematics is good. Pupils have gained good skills in arithmetic. They are given frequent opportunities to apply their skills to problem solving. Increasingly, they are reasoning and explaining their mathematical thinking.
- Leaders have achieved their intention of helping pupils to be confident writers. Pupils develop their ideas at length. Teachers captivate pupils' interest by using stimulating contexts. For example, pupils in Year 5 wrote empathetically as children living through a Second World War air raid. Pupils' writing from all year groups shows the development of increasingly adventurous yet appropriate vocabulary.
- Pupils are encouraged to find their own errors and re-draft their writing. The school's best practice in editing is not yet a consistent feature in all year groups. Pupils do not always have enough guidance on how to write effectively before they begin their work, or what to look for when editing. Teachers do not hold pupils sufficiently accountable for applying spelling and punctuation accurately in their writing. This constrains the potentially most able writers from writing at the higher standard. The school has begun new programmes for teaching spelling and grammar, but these have not yet overcome pupils' weaker skills in these aspects of English.
- Across the school, reading is taught successfully. Pupils are taught the sounds that letters represent from their early days in school. They go on to acquire good basic reading skills. Skilled teaching assistants continue to give additional teaching for pupils who need to catch up. Teachers use stories and poems effectively in lessons and the well-resourced library also stimulates pupils' interest in reading widely.
- Teachers are skilled at supporting the learning of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They use a wide range of adapted resources to make learning accessible. This inclusive practice, together with high-quality individual learning plans, ensures that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities enjoy their learning and make steady progress.
- There are strengths in the teaching of music and physical education. Pupils seen playing steel pans were able to keep a rhythm and produce a simple tune. Ball skills are built well over a range of lessons, so that pupils can apply them in small games.
- The teaching of science is not consistently effective. In parts of the school, pupils learn the range of science skills and knowledge for their age. For example, Year 1 pupils applied their knowledge of animals by classifying them in different ways, including in a

Venn diagram. Older pupils, however, are not yet having broad enough opportunities to learn the scientific skills expected for their age.

- Pupils enjoy school and apply themselves well to their learning. They are increasingly resilient in accepting that work needs to be corrected. They generally present their work well. Some older pupils have not yet acquired a cursive style of handwriting, which limits their achievement in writing. Equally, pupils' topic books do not show the same care with presentation that can be seen in English and mathematics books. The school's expectations for using rulers and for pupils' best handwriting are not consistently applied in all year groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff establish good relationships within the school community and build pupils' confidence so that they can learn well. Pupils are very positive about the support they have from staff. They say that it makes school a good place to be.
- Pupils benefit from the frequent and wide range of adventurous activities that the school plans. For example, during the inspection, Year 5 pupils had a 'forest activities' day, and Year 4 pupils worked with a theatre group. Other pupils handled a variety of reptiles brought in by experts to support the learning about animals, and Year 6 pupils were on a residential visit. These stimulating opportunities promote pupils' curiosity in the world around them and their resilience to tackle new experiences.
- Pupils learn well how to keep themselves safe. Teachers provide good guidance on the use of the internet, and this guidance extends to information for parents and helps to keep pupils safe when using computers. Pupils are able to articulate the school's procedure for practising fire drills.
- Leaders are responsive to pupils' needs, and particularly when pupils are vulnerable are able to offer a range of pastoral support. Parents value this recognition of their children as individuals.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good in the classroom and as they move around the school. They behave well in the playground and in breakfast club. There is rarely any disruption to learning. Largely this is because teaching captures pupils' interests. Pupils understand the school's 'five steps' for good behaviour and believe that they are applied fairly.
- Pupils play together safely. They are confident that mid-day supervisors will help them sort out any difficulties they may have in the playground. The school has developed pupils' understanding of what bullying really is. Consequently, pupils are confident to say that it is very rare and that it would be quickly dealt with.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite to adults and courteous in waiting to be heard. They listen to each other and share resources well.

- Attendance is rising as the school is increasingly confident to challenge parents when their children do not attend regularly. Leaders use a range of outside agencies to support them in ensuring that pupils are safe. Attendance over the last academic year was broadly in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes from national assessments at the end of key stage 2 for the last two years demonstrate the significant improvements the school has made to pupils' achievement. Pupils have made strong progress and reached standards in reading and mathematics above the national average, both at the expected level and at the higher standard.
- Pupils' attainment at the expected level in writing has been just above the national average, but the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard has been lower. This is because pupils' progress has been limited by their historically weaker standard of spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Progress for the most able pupils has not been as strong in writing as it has been in reading and mathematics.
- The improvements to teaching have enabled pupils in the current Years 5 and 6 to catch up from their low starting points at the end of key stage 1. The school's assessment information and the standard of the pupils' current work indicate that most pupils are working at least at the expected level for their age.
- In all year groups, current pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics. Pupils are making very strong progress in some aspects of writing, namely their compositional skills and their use of vocabulary. The legacy of weaker technical skills of spelling and punctuation limits the accuracy of their writing and remains to be overcome.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects. Music and physical education are taught effectively by specialist teachers and pupils' skills in these subjects are well developed. Pupils' knowledge of science is at the level expected for their age. Pupils' skills in investigating scientifically are less well developed, particularly in key stage 2. For example, older pupils do not take measurements, record results and draw conclusions in line with expectations in the national curriculum. However, pupils currently in Year 1 have good skills in this aspect of learning.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2018 was lower than the national average, but represented good progress for this group of pupils. Pupils who did not reach the expected standard are gaining these skills in Year 2.
- Pupils are encouraged to read and do so widely. The high-quality library where books are frequently changed stimulates pupils' interest in reading. Pupils are encouraged to track their own success with reading and do so enthusiastically.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. As teaching has strengthened, some have been able to catch up to the expectations for their age, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The very small number of disadvantaged pupils have additional high-quality support for their learning. The school's accurate assessment information and samples of their work

show that they are making good progress overall.

- Increasingly, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, both when moving into key stage 2 and when they move to secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- The leader for early years has been effective in bringing together the work of Nursery and the Reception class into a foundation stage unit. Children with different starting points make typically good progress across this integrated provision. The leader has a good knowledge of early years and ensures that assessment is accurate. Staff keep good records of children's progress.
- Children join early years with the development typically found for their age. However, a proportion of children have weaker development in speaking, writing and number. Children make good progress across their time in Nursery Year and those children who enter the Reception class from the Nursery class have caught up in these aspects of learning.
- In 2018, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was above the recent national average. A small number of children reached the higher standard in reading and number, but only one did so in writing.
- The leader for early years monitors the work of the unit regularly, but the systems in place to make sure that all aspects of teaching are having an equally good impact in all aspects of the curriculum are not secure.
- Children learn the sounds that letters represent and how to spell simple 'tricky' words. They were keen to discuss their writing with inspectors. Teachers do not sufficiently stress the importance of accurate letter formation. Consequently, the current work of the most able children in the Reception class shows that their letter formation has not developed as quickly as it might. This limits their chances of achieving higher standards in writing during their time in early years.
- Children learn within interesting topics, currently 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Staff develop children's compositional writing effectively by helping them to tell the story through pictures. Equally, they encourage children to construct sentences verbally to record experiences and ideas. These composed sentences are then scribed for the children by staff. Children's work in this aspect of writing shows maturity and good development.
- Both classes in early years establish good routines and encourage children to be independent. Staff, for example, took time with the relatively new Nursery children to ensure that all had their boots on to go out and explore the outdoors. Lunch in the Nursery class is an enjoyable experience for the children and is quiet and calm.
- Children behave well in both classes and help to tidy away resources. On occasions, the behaviour of a minority of older boys can be too boisterous in the outside learning space. Staff are, however, vigilant and ensure that all children are safe.
- Staff secure the welfare needs of children effectively. The youngest children in the Nursery Year are two years old. Their particular needs are taken account of and there are safe changing facilities and space for children who still need a nap. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that the need of two-year-olds to play and explore is met when

using the outdoor area with the older children. The food preparation area is safely bolted to ensure that it is not accessible by children.

- Parents are positive about the children's experience in the early years setting. Parents contribute pictures and comments when children have achieved new steps of development or practised their learning at home.

School details

Unique reference number	140766
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10058314

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Paul Byron
Acting Headteacher	Nicola Taylor-Bashford
Telephone number	01395 264875
Website	www.stjosephsprimaryschool.com
Email address	admin@stjo.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2016

Information about this school

- St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School is an average-sized school. It is now organised into single-aged classes. Children can join the school at two years old, but mostly children in Nursery Year are three when they join. The children in Nursery usually move into the Reception class, which also includes children from other nurseries in the area.
- The headteacher, as at the previous inspection, continues to be designated as an acting headteacher.
- The school is part of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. The scheme of delegation across the trust has recently changed and the local governing body now has responsibility for fewer aspects of the school’s effectiveness.
- Most of the pupils in the school are from a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. The number of pupils who are disadvantaged is low and is now much lower than the national average.

- The school operates a breakfast club and an after-school club for pupils at the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and observed learning in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Some of these observations were with the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work across an extensive range of books and considered the progress being made by pupils currently in school. Inspectors also listened to pupils read in class and in a small group.
- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, subject leaders and the leader for early years. An inspector also met with the current leader responsible for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. An inspector spoke to staff responsible for attendance, behaviour and child protection.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation summary. They considered the school's assessment information about the progress that pupils are making and their current standards. Inspectors reviewed the checks leaders had made on teaching. External reports on the effectiveness of the school were also taken into consideration. A range of policies and documentation in respect of safeguarding was reviewed.
- Two groups of pupils talked to inspectors about their views of the school. Other pupils were spoken to at lunchtime and in lessons. The 31 responses to the pupil survey were also taken into consideration.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body. She also held meetings with officials of the trust. She spoke to the chief executive officer of the trust on the telephone. Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. The lead inspector considered the 64 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 57 written comments. The views of 24 members of staff were taken into consideration through the online staff survey. A meeting was held with one teacher. Safeguarding was discussed with members of staff across the inspection.

Inspection team

Wendy Marriott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Ivermee

Ofsted Inspector

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