

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Aldrens Lane, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 2DU

Inspection dates

15–16 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leadership and management of the school are weak. Leaders and governors have failed to bring about the necessary improvements to ensure that pupils benefit from an acceptable standard of education.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is overgenerous. Plans to bring about improvements have been ineffective. Leaders have failed to halt the decline in pupils' outcomes.
- Middle leaders do not have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the subjects that they lead.
- In most year groups, the quality of teaching is weak. Teachers' use of assessment information is poor. Learning is not matched to pupils' needs. Consequently, almost all groups do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils' academic outcomes are inadequate. Most pupils currently at the school continue to considerably underachieve.
- Leaders have not used the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well enough to ensure that these pupils overcome their barriers to learning.
- The curriculum for subjects other than English and mathematics is not fit for purpose. It does not build effectively on pupils' prior knowledge.
- In most year groups, teachers' weak subject knowledge contributes to pupils' poor progress. Pupils do not make enough progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average. However, too many pupils are persistently absent from school.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through the range of opportunities that they provide.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are promoted well. They feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The new associate headteacher has quickly identified the considerable weaknesses in the school and has begun to take positive action.
- Children make good progress in the early years. They thrive in the nurturing environment that leaders have created and are well prepared for Year 1.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - taking swift action to secure effective and substantive senior leadership
 - ensuring that leaders and governors secure consistently good teaching to enable pupils to make the progress they should across key stages 1 and 2
 - improving the skills of middle leaders so they have a greater impact on teaching and learning across the subjects they lead
 - designing the curriculum more effectively so it builds on pupils' prior learning in all subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics
 - ensuring that the best use is made of the additional funding to enable disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND to overcome their barriers to learning so they achieve well.
- Swiftly improve the quality of teaching and learning so that the proportion of pupils that reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 at least matches the national average by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning
 - learning accurately meets the needs of pupils and provides them with appropriate challenge
 - pupils who are struggling are given the help they need to catch up quickly, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND
 - teachers have secure subject knowledge to teach effectively across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics
 - teachers provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to deepen their understanding of mathematical ideas so that pupils are well equipped to solve problems
 - teachers tackle gaps in pupils' learning, especially in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills, so that they are able to develop as competent writers.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- For far too many years, pupils who attend this school have not benefited from a good-quality education. Considerable staff turbulence, particularly at senior leadership level, since the previous inspection has contributed to the school's effectiveness falling even further. The standard of education that pupils receive is inadequate.
- Weak leadership at all levels has failed to stem the sustained decline in the school's effectiveness. Teaching is poor, and pupils' attainment has remained significantly below the national average for several years. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND. There is little sign of improvement for those pupils currently at the school. They continue to be as ill-prepared for the next stage of their education as their peers have been in previous years.
- Leadership of all subjects is ineffective. Development plans are of poor quality. They do not identify the appropriate priorities for improvement, nor the actions leaders will take to address endemic weaknesses in teaching. Subject leaders have little understanding of the quality of teaching in their area of responsibility. As a result, they are unaware of key weaknesses. Leaders are unable to provide appropriate training and support to ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to help pupils learn effectively.
- Leaders' ineffective use of professional development has led to confusion among staff and compounded the poor-quality teaching across the school. Training provided by external consultants has not been used well nor built upon effectively. Staff have too few opportunities to work with other colleagues and to learn from expertise outside the school.
- The school's curriculum lacks clear purpose and structure. Leaders do not understand how the curriculum should be shaped in order to build on pupils' prior learning. This is especially true in key stage 2. Leaders have not ensured that teachers have the subject skills and knowledge they need to enable pupils to achieve well across a range of subjects.
- The coordinator of the provision for pupils with SEND has an accurate understanding of the needs of these pupils. However, senior leaders have not ensured effective leadership of this aspect of the school's work during unavoidable periods of absence. Consequently, pupils with SEND have not been supported well enough over time. This has contributed to their poor progress in a range of subjects.
- The pupil premium funding is not used to good effect. Leaders have identified the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. However, their plans to help these pupils to overcome these barriers do not identify what needs to be done to help pupils thrive. Leaders' actions have not ensured that disadvantaged pupils receive the support and guidance that they need.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance are having little impact on pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- The newly appointed associate headteacher has swiftly identified the school's considerable weaknesses. She, in partnership with the reformed governing body, is

beginning to take some positive action. Nonetheless, the extent of change required to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes is considerable. Recent actions have not made a dent in the many shortcomings at the school. As a result, the capacity for further improvement is fragile.

- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Older pupils take on additional responsibilities as sports leaders, worship monitors and as members of committees. The Christian ethos within the school is strong. Pupils have a respect for equality. They value differences and recognise that each individual is special.
- Leaders use the local community to support learning through trips to museums and places of interest. For example, pupils visited the beach as part of their work on habitats and the local castle when studying the history of the Romans in Lancaster.
- Leaders provide a varied range of extra-curricular activities for pupils through the many clubs on offer. For example, pupils have the opportunity to play an instrument, to cook meals in the 'change for life' club and develop woodwork skills.
- The additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport is used effectively to provide training for staff and opportunities for pupils to be active. Pupils participate in a range of sports, including orienteering. They enjoy the 'daily mile' challenge. The trophies displayed in the school hall are testament to pupils' success in local multi-sports competitions.
- Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) should not be appointed.

Governance of the school

- Over time, governors have not held leaders to account for pupils' weak academic outcomes. Recent appointments, following an external review of governance by the diocese, have strengthened the knowledge and expertise of the governing body.
- Over the past two years, with support from the local authority and the diocese, governors have been proactive in initiating considerable changes in leadership and staffing in the school. However, these actions have made little impact on improving the quality of education that pupils receive.
- Current governors have a clear understanding of the weaknesses of the school. Recent training has enabled them to begin to challenge leaders and hold them to account for their actions. Governors check the information they receive from leaders. They understand and fulfil their statutory duties with regard to safeguarding.
- Governors want the best for the school, its pupils, staff and parents and carers. They are proud to be associated with the school, which lies at the heart of the local community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Checks are in place to ensure that adults, including volunteers who help in school regularly, are suitable to work with children. Staff are vigilant. Pupils' safety and welfare are at the heart of everything that leaders and staff do. All records relating to

safeguarding are detailed and well maintained.

- Staff know the signs of neglect and abuse because of the good-quality training they receive. They understand the procedures to follow and they speak confidently that concerns are acted upon appropriately by leaders.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies, the parish and local charities to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate help and guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Weak teaching in most year groups leads to many pupils not gaining the knowledge and skills they require to achieve as well as they should. Pupils do not receive the support they need to fulfil their potential. Teachers' use of assessment information is ineffective in most year groups. Consequently, learning meets the needs of too few pupils and their progress stalls.
- Too much teaching lacks challenge. As a result, pupils do not gain secure knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. This limits the progress they make across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Training for staff from a range of external consultants has not been embedded. It has had too little impact. Different approaches have often led to confusion and inconsistency in what should be taught. This has been compounded further by staff changes, often within an academic year. Leaders have not ensured that actions to improve the quality of teaching have been successful. The overall quality of teaching across the school is poor.
- Weak teaching in English has led to gaps in pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation skills. The limited subject knowledge of many teachers means that pupils do not develop the vocabulary they need to succeed, particularly in lower key stage 2. This hinders the progress they make in their writing.
- In mathematics, most teachers do not build systematically on what pupils already know. Learning lacks sufficient challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their mathematical skills and knowledge in any depth.
- Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are not given the appropriate support they need in class. As a result, few of these pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Those pupils who are struggling with their learning are not given the help they need to catch up quickly. Consequently, they fall further behind.
- Some teachers lack the subject knowledge to ensure that their teaching helps pupils to achieve well across the curriculum. Work in pupils' books in subjects other than English and mathematics shows that activities lack challenge and pupils make limited progress in a range of subjects.
- Teachers foster strong, positive relationships consistently within the school. There are high levels of cooperation modelled by staff. Pupils work well together. This contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to learning, even when the work they are set is

inappropriate for their needs.

- The teaching of phonics is more effective than in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils in key stage 1 develop the skills and knowledge they need to be successful readers. However, this success is not built upon effectively as pupils move through the school. Consequently, pupils' early progress in reading stalls.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Positive relationships fostered between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils feel safe and valued. They are confident that adults will listen to them if they have any worries. Pupils said there is always someone with whom they can talk.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including water safety and when using the internet. They understand the importance of keeping fit and eating a healthy diet. Pupils enjoy the 'daily mile' challenge and the 'healthy living club' where they learn to cook healthy meals. Leaders provide a daily nutritious snack for all pupils.
- Pupils enjoy the range of enrichment activities that leaders provide, including self-defence club, 'knitting and needle' club, computer club and choir. They are particularly proud of achievements in the county competition 'last choir standing', in which they achieved third place in 2018.
- Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously as role models for younger pupils, sports monitors, members of committees and as worship monitors preparing resources for daily worship. They take pride in their achievements and celebrate the important values of the six 'Rs': resilient, resourceful, responsible, reflective, reasoning and respect.
- Leaders provide an exciting range of enrichment experiences to raise aspirations and expand opportunities for pupils, including visitors from the local community and residential trips. Pupils are proud of their fundraising for local charities and they support the local community, for example raising funds for a local hospice, collecting for the local food bank and litter-picking. Pupils who spoke with inspectors shared their own aspirations for the future, for example to be engineers, hairdressers, teachers or to join the armed forces. This work ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils understand the different forms bullying can take, including homophobic and racist bullying. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said bullying is rare but when it does happen, it is dealt with effectively by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance overall is broadly in line with the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is increasing. This has a detrimental effect on the progress that they make.
- Pupils are polite, well-mannered and caring. They treat each other with respect and

understand how their behaviour can have an impact on the feelings of others.

- Pupils work hard. Their positive attitudes to learning, and pride in their achievements, are reflected in the way they conduct themselves sensibly around school and during lessons. Learning takes place without disruption.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils are inadequate. Pupils do not achieve well in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Over time, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 has remained constantly below the national average. This is also true for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Historically, teachers have not built on the good progress children have made in the early years. Pupils do not start key stage 2 with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to be successful.
- Progress at the end of key stage 2 is broadly in line with the national average but has continued to decline over the past three years, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- The school's own assessment information shows that, currently, the progress pupils are making in each year group in key stages 1 and 2 is unlikely to enable them to reach the standards the school expects of them by the end of the academic year. Standards are declining in a number of year groups, especially for disadvantaged pupils. This is because these pupils make too few gains in their learning across different year groups.
- Pupils' progress is poor. Despite recent improvements in Year 6, there are too few signs that pupils currently at the school are making stronger progress than has been the case in the past. Pupils are not well equipped to make a successful start when they enter Year 7.
- Work in pupils' books shows that, for current pupils, most teachers do not use assessment effectively in mathematics and writing to identify pupils who are struggling or pupils who need further challenge. Consequently, activities do not meet pupils' needs well. In mathematics, activities do not build on pupils' prior knowledge in order to embed pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. This hinders their ability to solve mathematical problems and to explain their reasoning.
- In writing, pupils' limited vocabulary and their lack of proficiency in grammar, spelling and punctuation undermine the quality of the work they produce.
- Phonics is taught consistently well from the Reception Year. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, or when re-checked at the end of Year 2, has remained above average. Pupils use their phonics knowledge with increasing accuracy in their reading. Over time, this knowledge has not been built upon as pupils progress through the school. This hinders their ability to be able to read widely and often as fluent, competent readers.
- Pupils' work in curricular subjects, other than English and mathematics, lacks breadth and depth. Activities do not build on pupils' prior knowledge. There is little evidence of progress over time within year groups and across key stages.

Early years provision

Good

- While across the rest of the school performance has declined, provision and outcomes in the early years have flourished. This is due to high-quality leadership. Children have a good start at this school.
- Leaders in the early years have a good understanding of how young children learn. They ensure that teaching is consistently strong. Staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding to support children's learning well because of the guidance and training they receive. Staff appreciate the opportunity to work with other colleagues, including in other schools, to share their ideas, knowledge and expertise.
- Children attend the school's part-time nursery, or other local early years providers, before starting school in the Reception class. The majority of children enter this class with the skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age.
- There are very specific reasons why there was a dip in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2018. Teachers' high expectations have ensured that the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has remained consistently above the national average. Children make good progress and are prepared well for Year 1.
- Leaders and staff have created a safe and nurturing environment in which children thrive. The carefully designed activities support purposeful learning and ignite children's curiosity. The outdoor provision and the breadth of the curriculum contribute well to children's learning. Activities are carefully planned and supported by adults. Good relationships are modelled well. This contributes to the good progress children make and their positive behaviour.
- Children settle quickly into well-established routines. Leaders gather assessment information from a range of activities. They accurately identify the next steps in children's learning. Technology is used well to share with parents what their children are learning at school. Teachers provide ideas for how parents can help their children at home. Engagement with parents continues to improve.
- Children are happy and engaged in their learning. Staff promote children's high levels of cooperation and independence. Behaviour is good as a result of the calm and focused atmosphere that leaders have created. This contributes effectively to the good progress children make.
- Leaders have accurately identified that language acquisition is the key barrier to learning for many of the children. They work effectively with professionals and other agencies to enable staff to support children effectively and meet their needs, particularly disadvantaged children and children with SEND.
- Staff use conversations and questions skilfully to encourage children to expand and develop their spoken vocabulary. Mispronunciations are corrected sensitively. For example, children speak confidently about the life cycle of a caterpillar. They are excited about the imminent appearance of the butterflies from their pupas.
- Phonics is taught consistently from the Reception Year onwards. Children's work shows they apply their phonics knowledge with increasing accuracy in their own writing. Leaders provide opportunities for children to practise and refine their writing in a range

of areas. For example, children searched excitedly outside, hunting for words. They were eager to share with others the words they had found and recorded.

- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures and routines are understood by staff and contribute to children's ongoing safety and welfare. Risk assessments are detailed and appropriate. Statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	119620
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10087847

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Pendlebury
Headteacher/Principal	Sarah Deakin
Telephone number	01524 65576
Website	www.st-josephs-lancaster.lancs.sch.uk/
Email address	head@st-josephs-rc12.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	April 2018

Information about this school

- The school has undergone significant change in the past year. Currently, the school has no permanent headteacher.
- The current associate headteacher is the second associate headteacher in post since September 2018. She took up post on 13 May 2019 on a part-time temporary contract.
- Since the last inspection, the diocese has carried out a review of governance. As a result, there has been a considerable change in the membership of the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- The school is receiving substantial support from the local authority and the Diocese of Lancaster.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The early years and key stage 1 pupils are in a separate, modern purpose-built building set in its own grounds. Key stage 2 pupils are in the original older building, together

with the offices and main hall.

- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is more than double the national average.
- A section 48 inspection was conducted in February 2019.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and behaviour. Leaders joined inspectors on most of these classroom visits.
- Inspectors observed and spoke with pupils during lessons and at playtimes. They met formally with groups of pupils and listened to them read.
- Meetings were held with the new associate headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors also met with five members of the governing body, two representatives from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and on display. They also looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the four responses to Parent View, including one free-text comment. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Nick Capron

Ofsted Inspector

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