

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Mountain View, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0DG

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Previously weak teaching and learning continues to affect pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Some essential skills in reading and writing have not been taught well enough in the past. Pupils' vocabulary is limited as is their understanding of sentence structure.
- Pupils are not provided with opportunities to solve problems or use their reasoning skills often enough in their mathematics work.
- Teaching is not fully effective. Although pupils are supported to remedy historical gaps in their knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics, their work is not challenging. Too few pupils reach the highest standards at the end of each key stage.
- There has been significant turmoil at the school in the last 18 months. High rates of staff and pupil movement created uncertainty among some parents.
- Middle leaders, including in the early years, have received support from the local authority to develop their roles. However, these leaders are only just starting to improve achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- Some aspects of the 2010 Equality Act are not taught consistently well. For example, Year 3 pupils have a better understanding of same sex relationships than some older pupils.
- In the wider curriculum, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their subject-specific skills, especially in science.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has brought about significant improvements to tackle weaknesses in teaching and learning. As a result, progress in all subjects is improving for current pupils.
- The English and mathematics leaders have introduced new schemes to bring about greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The headteacher has introduced a broad and balanced curriculum that is starting to build pupils' knowledge in a range of subjects well.
- Governors have improved their own practice to address historic weaknesses in their leadership. They now have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The headteacher has improved the identification and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils make good progress.
- Staff act as good role models for pupils. Because of this, behaviour is good and pupils feel safe and are happy at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that pupils' progress improves by ensuring that:
 - pupils are challenged to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that a greater proportion achieve the higher standards or greater depth at the end of key stage 2
 - children and pupils develop their range of vocabulary in the early years, key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 to read more fluently
 - children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 develop their range of punctuation and pupils in key stage 2 use more varied and complex sentences in their writing
 - pupils have more opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics
 - pupils across the school have further opportunities to develop their subject-specific skills in subjects other than English and mathematics, particularly their investigative skills in science.
- Further improve pupils' personal development by more consistently promoting pupils' understanding and respect for the protected characteristics detailed in the 2010 Equality Act across the school.
- Build on the strengths in leadership and management by developing the role of middle leaders, including in the early years, to improve children and pupils' progress and attainment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Following her long-term secondment in the summer term 2018, the headteacher has led the school with determination to ensure that there is now a culture of positivity and high expectations. She has steadied the school through a period of significant turmoil and staff movement to ensure that the school is improving.
- There was an exceptionally high rate of pupil movement at the school in the summer term of 2018. This has been described by governors and other parents as a 'snowball effect'. The movement of siblings and friendship groups led to a high number of parents moving their children to other local schools at times other than the end of Year 6. This was due to a combination of the loss of the private nursery and the movement of several staff. Leaders have tackled these areas well to ensure that the school is now improving.
- The headteacher has taken effective action to stem the decline in pupils' progress that has occurred in recent years, particularly in mathematics. She has effectively tackled the weakest teaching by making astute appointments and by promoting staff development. This has raised the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Teachers are positive about the opportunities that they have to develop their teaching skills. All the staff who responded to Ofsted's survey said that they felt proud to be part of this school.
- The English leader has successfully introduced a new phonics scheme which has helped to improve pupils' phonics skills and raise attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check over the last two years. However, there remain aspects of reading and writing that require improvement. This is because pupils have not been encouraged to develop their vocabulary well enough.
- The mathematics leader has introduced a new teaching scheme. This has provided continuity to the way in which teachers approach calculations. The curriculum has been arranged so that pupils can catch up on lost learning from previous years as well as building on their prior learning. However, leaders have not ensured that there is sufficient challenge for pupils in their problem-solving and reasoning work.
- Leaders have made a concerted effort to identify those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. This funding has been used appropriately to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to subsidise trips and other experiences so that these pupils can access the full range of activities on offer at the school.
- The headteacher has ensured that the provision for pupils with SEND is a strength of the school. As a result, these pupils make good progress. There are clear indications that previously some pupils' needs were overlooked. This is no longer the case, leaders now identify a larger proportion of pupils and no one slips through the net. The headteacher and governors are committed to a fully inclusive school and have established effective links with other agencies to cater for pupils' needs.
- Leaders have used the physical education and sport funding effectively. They have matched activities skilfully to pupils' needs, such as yoga and horse riding. These activities promote all aspects of pupils' well-being as well as promoting healthy

lifestyles. Pupils are positive about the wealth of extra-curricular opportunities available at the school.

- The headteacher has ensured that there is a broad and balanced curriculum in place. Middle leaders have been provided with a wealth of support from the local authority. This has been essential in helping improve the quality of leadership in the school. However, against a background of underperformance, middle leaders, including in the early years, have not yet improved their subjects well enough to ensure that pupils are challenged to achieve the highest standards. For example, in science pupils' investigative skills are not developed consistently well across all year groups.
- Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. They have some strong opportunities to learn about the beliefs of others and have a good grounding in their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are positive about the school. Typical comments praise teachers for their excellent relationships with pupils and for the improvements that have been brought about in the last 12 months.

Governance of the school

- Governors have responded with determination to the decline in progress and standards of recent years. They have reflected on their own effectiveness as a governing body. As a result, they now set higher expectations of leaders and staff at the school.
- Governors have been central in addressing the weaknesses in leadership and management. They hold leaders to account in greater measure by asking incisive questions at meetings to ensure that the school is once again improving.
- Governors ensure that their monitoring of leaders' work is based on evidence. They have used third parties to satisfy themselves that the school is moving in the right direction.
- Governors are keen to leave the past behind them. They are now forward thinking and have set a distinctive Christian vision for the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a comprehensive system in place for handling any concerns about pupils. Staff are trained regularly and receive frequent updates to ensure a culture of vigilance.
- Governors use their considerable expertise to audit the school's approach to safeguarding. They closely monitor the effectiveness of the school's policy and procedures.
- A number of governors are trained in safer recruitment. The link governor for safeguarding checks to make sure that the necessary employment checks have been carried out on staff who work in the school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at the school because of the positive relationships that

they have with staff. They have a strong awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The way in which pupils respond to adults in the early years shows that they feel safe to ask questions and explore their environment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning in the school requires improvement due to the continuing effect of historically weak teaching on pupils' progress. Effective leadership has improved assessment arrangements and there is now more reliable information about pupils' next steps in learning. This is enabling teachers to identify and remedy gaps in pupils' learning. However, in some classes and subjects teachers' expectations are not high enough for pupils to surge ahead and achieve the high standard or the greater depth in learning of which they are capable.
- Similarly, in the early years children's work is not demanding enough to challenge them to make the best progress possible. The work in children's books shows that different children achieve very similar outcomes in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers promote phonics effectively in the early years. Adults have a clear understanding of how to help children build upon their existing knowledge. Although their understanding of phonics has improved, pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 find it difficult to read fluently because they do not have a good enough range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. Their vocabulary knowledge is too limited and consequently they struggle to read smoothly and with comprehension.
- Past weaker teaching has left pupils with gaps in their skills in writing. The lack of focus on extending pupils' vocabulary is evident in their use of description. As they move throughout the school the quality of the language that they use in their writing hampers their progress. The tide is turning as leaders and teachers are doing an admirable job to help pupils to catch up. Teachers design interesting activities to engage pupils in developing their vocabulary. Despite this improvement, weaknesses remain. In key stage 1, pupils' use of punctuation is limited. This is also the case for pupils in upper key stage 2 who use a restricted range of sentence structures in their writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Pupils make strong progress in their calculations because staff are focusing on developing pupils' basics skills. The curriculum has been organised so that pupils build on their prior learning. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Pupils' work in Years 1, 2 and 3 particularly shows that problem-solving is lacking.
- Teachers provide pupils with SEND with effective support. They make good progress and at times show stronger achievement than other pupils in school. For example, the written work of older pupils with SEND displays more developed vocabulary than some of their peers because their additional learning support has focused heavily on developing this.
- The teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics is improving because the headteacher has introduced a curriculum that sequences pupils' learning well across topics and subjects. However, there is a lack of emphasis on developing pupils' subject-specific skills, especially in science where pupils have too few opportunities to develop

their investigative skills.

- Teachers design activities to capture pupils' interests. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 study a diverse range of artists such as the illustrator Isabelle Arsenault and painter Keith Haring.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards their learning because of the excellent relationships that they have with staff. Staff act as effective role models for pupils.
- Older pupils understand the need for homework and see this as consolidation of their learning in preparation for moving up into Year 6 and subsequently into secondary education. In Year 6, pupils have the opportunity to visit a local college to learn more about their career options.
- Pupils know the dangers of sharing their personal details and understand the need to approach a trusted adult to report any issues that they encounter when online. Leaders arrange for a variety of guest speakers to support pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe, for example from the police who promote pupils' resilience and confidence regarding issues around drug and alcohol awareness.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy. For example, the science curriculum develops pupils' knowledge well so that they understand how the body responds to exercise and how to maintain a healthy diet.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities that they have to explore British values such as voting for school councillors and participating in debates in class. Year 5 pupils recount with enthusiasm their debate about whether the moon landings were falsified.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, on one of the inspection days younger pupils enjoyed a visit from an external company as part of their topic work on bugs and minibeasts.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is also developed well through trips such as visiting museums and local places of interest.
- There are no logged incidents of bullying. The pupils with whom the inspector spoke agree that bullying does not happen at St Joseph's. The responses to the Parent View and the staff online survey reflect the pupils' views.
- There are highly effective examples of how staff promote pupils' understanding of equalities. For example, in their study of 'Twelfth Night', Year 3 pupils have had opportunities to discuss issues around same-sex relationships. However, pupils' understanding of LGBT issues is patchy. Although leaders are rectifying this, some older pupils do not have the same understanding of what LGBT means. This is because the curriculum has not previously equipped them with the same awareness.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well mannered and pleasant. Their conduct and behaviour around school is very good. There are ample opportunities at lunch times for pupils to keep themselves occupied or active. This enriches the school day.
- Exclusions are rare and when they occur this is part of leaders' expectations of high standards for pupils' behaviour. Any incidents of poor behaviour are logged carefully.
- There are no disruptions to lessons. Pupils feel happy to contribute to class discussions because they know that their opinions are valued.
- Pupils are self-disciplined. They value the family atmosphere of the school and are friendly towards each other. They care for the school environment well.
- Leaders have worked effectively to halve the number of persistent absentees since the inspection that took place in October 2018. The attendance for other pupils is around the national average, which again indicates an improvement in pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The small number of children enter their Reception Year with skills that are at least typical for their age. Children's progress over the course of their time in the early years requires improvement. This is because teachers' expectations for their achievement are not high enough to enable them to make greater gains in their learning. Although attainment in the early years has been improving over the last few years, the proportion of children who gained a good level of development by the end of the early years was only broadly average in 2018. The present work of children suggests that attainment continues to be limited by the expectations set by teachers.
- In key stage 1, pupils' outcomes in reading and writing continue to be affected by the weak teaching that they have previously received. Pupils who are presently in Years 1, 2 and 3 are overly reliant on their phonic skills. This explains how phonics results have improved in response to leaders' actions but why the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average in 2018.
- Over recent years, the results of national assessments show a decline in the progress and attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2. Although pupils' progress has been broadly average in reading and writing, their progress in mathematics has declined. It was significantly below the national average in 2018. No pupils achieved greater depth or the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018.
- Leaders' actions have firmly set the school on course for recovery. Improvements in teaching and the use of assessment are raising progress and resolving previous deficiencies. Nevertheless, the school's data shows that progress is not consistently good and continues to fluctuate, linked to the effect of historically weaker teaching in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. The gaps in pupils' skills continue to hinder progress in Years 2 and 3, such as in their vocabulary development.
- At times, teachers' expectations are not high enough and this restricts progress,

particularly of the most able pupils. There is better evidence of stronger progress in pupils' books in Years 5 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The funding for disadvantaged pupils has been used to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils who are eligible for this funding make better progress than was previously the case in all aspects of their work. However, their progress is presently similar to that of other pupils and as such requires improvement.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress due to the individualised support that they receive.
- Although pupils' science work across the school shows a lack of development for pupils' investigative skills, the curriculum does allow pupils to develop their knowledge of the topics that they study well in subjects other than English and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	112335
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10083947

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school received an inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 in October 2018.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patty Williams
Headteacher	Andrea Worthington
Telephone number	01900 829859
Website	www.st-josephs-cockermouth.cumbria.sch.uk/
Email address	office@st-josephs-cockermouth.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 July 2014

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The new headteacher joined the school in the summer term 2018 on a long-term secondment. This followed a short period of cover for the previous post holder prior to her resignation.
- The vast majority of pupils at the school are of a White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are identified with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is well above that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. This has more than doubled in the last three years.
- There is a larger-than-average proportion of pupils that join or leave the school other

than at the start of the academic year. In the 12 months preceding the inspection, 24 pupils left the school other than at the end of key stage 2.

- Leaders introduced Nursery provision run by the governing body in January 2019. The first child joined the provision just after Easter 2019.
- The governing body runs breakfast club provision and after school provision at the school.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes: Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 share a class. Year 3 pupils are presently taught with Year 4; and Year 5 pupils share a class with Year 6 pupils. The numbers in each year group vary from one to 14. There are presently too few children in the early years to include a judgement in this inspection report.
- There has been a high mobility of teaching staff. There are only two members of teaching staff who have been at the school longer than two years.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character took place in March 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in each class, including joint observations with the headteacher. He examined a range of pupils' work in mathematics and writing and from across the curriculum.
- The inspector listened to pupils read individually from Years 1, 2, 3 and 5 and heard pupils read as part of classroom activities.
- The inspector spoke with pupils formally in groups and informally around the school.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and lunchtimes and when pupils were moving around the school.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 31 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. He also spoke to six parents who were dropping their children off at the start of the school day.
- The inspector took account of responses from 11 staff who completed the staff survey.
- Meetings were held with governors, senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching staff.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation, such as the school's evaluation of its own performance, including its areas for development. He also looked at attendance and behaviour records.
- The inspector reviewed safeguarding documentation, considered how this related to daily practice, and spoke with staff and pupils about the school's processes for keeping pupils safe.
- There were no Year 6 pupils present during this inspection. These pupils were participating in a transition project at the local secondary school.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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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