

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Cherry Orchard, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 9AN

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 January 2022

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School enjoy school and love to learn. They are keen to improve their learning and take on board teachers' feedback. Pupils said that they love mathematics. Teachers' explanations help them to learn. Lessons are fun too. Leaders set high expectations, to which pupils rise. They make strong progress in their learning, and achieve well.

Pupils behave exceptionally well here. They are polite, respectful, kind and considerate. Pupils' caring, compassionate nature grows out of the Catholic life of the school and the school's values. Staff model these values and pupils embody them. Pupils regularly run charity events and collections to help those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities such as librarian, playground helper or faith ambassador.

Bullying happens so rarely here that most pupils said they cannot remember the last time it happened. Pupils treat others with kindness. They are confident that if bullying did happen, staff would sort it out quickly. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Pupils build confidence and resilience through extra-curricular activities such as sports and choir. Music plays an important part in pupils' personal and spiritual development.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Under the headteacher's unwavering leadership, the school has continued to improve despite the challenges of COVID-19, as well as recent personal challenges for key members of staff. Curriculum thinking is well thought out. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils' learning is well sequenced and builds on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. Leaders have worked with teachers to map out the key knowledge and skills pupils need in each subject. These documents help teachers to assess pupils' learning. They use this information to inform their teaching. Leaders know that some inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum remain. Most teachers use the effective strategies that they have learned in training to maximise pupils' learning. However, teaching assistants have

not received this training and the strategies are not fully embedded in all teachers' practice. Some teachers do not spot pupils' mistakes and address them quickly enough. This holds some pupils back from achieving their best. Leaders know that addressing this is key to reaching their ambitious curriculum targets.

A love of reading is evident across the school. Pupils talk about their favourite authors. They read widely and often. Teachers bring stories to life when they read to pupils every day. When pupils read aloud, they read fluently and with good intonation. Leaders are very proud that the school won the recent summer reading competition run by the local library. Pupils read confidently and apply their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words. Staff provide good support for pupils who need extra help. Well-rehearsed arm and hand gestures help pupils to remember letters and sounds.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively by well-trained staff. Staff identify their needs quickly and make sure that pupils benefit from small-group support. As a result, pupils with SEND make strong progress.

Leaders identified gaps in pupils' knowledge due to pupils missing school as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have put in place interventions to close these gaps, and most pupils have caught up with their peers.

The quality of early years provision is a strength of the school. Exciting learning activities engage children, and provide meaningful learning opportunities. Well-established routines help children to learn. As a result, children make good progress in the early years.

Some younger children have missed out on opportunities to socialise with other children due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has had an adverse effect on their development. Some older pupils developed anxiety as a result of their absence from school. Extra pastoral support has been provided to help pupils get back on track emotionally. This support is making a positive difference, and pupils value it. They know that good learning starts with good mental and physical health. Pupils love to join in with activities such as trips, sports clubs, music lessons and performances. These activities help to build pupils' confidence and resilience, ensuring that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders, governors, parents and carers all value the commitment and resilience of all the staff. Leaders work hard to protect teachers' work-life balance. Staff feel well supported. Governors know the school well. They are proud of the school's achievements. They support leaders' ambitions for the school to be the best it can be, so that all pupils achieve as well as they possibly can.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders are very serious about their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They ensure that staff are well trained to spot signs of vulnerability in pupils' behaviour. Staff receive regular updates from leaders on the latest advice and guidance. Staff know how to report concerns. Leaders analyse records of concerns to spot patterns and trends. They

use this information to ensure that pupils and their families receive the right help at the right time, working with external agencies where appropriate. Leaders ensure that rigorous employment checks are carried out on all staff before they start work.

What does the school need to do to improve

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not pick up pupils' misconceptions or mistakes as quickly as they should. Opportunities are missed to discuss pupils' learning and address misunderstandings. Where this is the case, gaps in pupils' learning persist. Leaders should ensure that teachers maximise opportunities to address pupils' misconceptions, to help pupils build a secure knowledge base and embed their learning.
- Leaders have provided good-practice training for teachers, but COVID-19 restrictions have affected the embedding of these teaching strategies. Support staff have not yet benefited from this training. As a result, some inconsistencies remain in how some subjects are taught. Leaders should ensure that all staff benefit from this training, so that these strategies can be implemented across the curriculum consistently well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	124357
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10205146
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tina Rowe
Headteacher	Deirdre McLeary
Website	www.stjosephslichfield.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic primary school is a small, one-form entry Roman Catholic primary school in the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in March 2017. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the SEND coordinator and subject leaders.

- The inspector met with a small group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, via an online meeting. She also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. A selection of pupils' work in the foundation subjects was also considered.
- The inspector reviewed a range of safeguarding documents, and spoke with pupils, staff and leaders about the arrangements for safeguarding.
- The inspector observed pupils around school and in lessons, and spoke to pupils about behaviour and life in school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online survey, including free-text comments. The inspector spoke with parents at the school gate.
- Responses to pupil and staff surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Jane Spilsbury, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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