

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Aldrens Lane, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 2DU

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Disruption due to staffing changes has limited pupils' overall progress and there are gaps in pupils' learning, most particularly at Key Stage 1.
- There are variations in the quality of teaching and overall it requires improvement. For example, expectations of pupils are not always high enough and the quality of marking is not always effective.
- The achievement of boys usually lags behind that of girls. In Key Stage 1, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as others.
- The achievement of the most able pupils in writing and mathematics requires improvement. Pupils do not apply these skills enough in other subjects.
- The support provided by teaching assistants is not always good enough. This slows the progress made by some pupils, particularly disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- The environment in some classrooms does not offer pupils enough guidance about how to improve their work or what to aim for in order to reach high standards.
- The school's partnership with parents in relation to pupils' learning is not always effective.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the early years make a good start because of good teaching and good levels of care and support. Children settle quickly into the school's routines and are happy.
- Strong features in the quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6 help pupils to make better progress than in other years. Better teaching in Key Stage 1 is removing the legacy of pupils' underachievement in the past.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 2 achieve well and gain standards similar to, or better than, others in the school and higher standards than similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils feel safe and are cared for very well. Effective support from the parent support worker has reduced successfully absence and improved rapidly pupils' attendance which is now average.
- The curriculum promotes good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Increasingly, it is inspiring both boys and girls to learn.
- The determined headteacher, supported by effective senior leaders and a strong governing body, are improving teaching and quickening the progress of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons. Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the headteacher and other senior staff, the learning mentor and a local authority officer.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information on pupils' current progress; planning and checks on the quality of teaching; assessment records; the new curriculum; the school's evaluation of its own performance; records relating to behaviour and attendance; the sports premium action plan; records of the progress of disadvantaged pupils and most able pupils and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6 and analysed samples of pupils' work in their books.
- The views of staff were evaluated by analysing the 25 responses to the Ofsted staff inspection questionnaire.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for inspectors to take these into account. The views of seven parents were gauged from an open meeting held at the start of the second day of the inspection. An analysis of the school's recent survey of parents' opinions was also made.

Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a very significant number of planned and unplanned staff changes covered by temporary staff. The planned absence of the early years leader is currently being covered by an experienced early years leader seconded from another local school. Recent permanent appointments include a senior deputy headteacher leading Key Stage 1 and a deputy headteacher leading Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is always at least good in order to raise achievement to good or better for all pupils, but particularly that of pupils in Key Stage 1 by:
 - establishing a climate for learning in all classes that expects the most of pupils and inspires them to want to learn
 - ensuring tasks in all lessons are always set at the right level of difficulty to challenge fully pupils in mathematics and writing
 - devising strategies to secure good or better progress for boys across the school and for disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 1
 - improving pupils' basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics by providing opportunities for them to use these skills in a wide variety of subjects and contexts
 - ensuring marking is always effective in giving pupils a good understanding of their next steps in learning and how to reach higher standards
 - ensuring support staff have the skills and knowledge to always be able to help pupils to learn and make good progress.
- Establish effective strategies to enable parents to become successful partners in their children's education and thereby help their children to do well.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership, including governance, is ambitious and is turning the school around by improving teaching and raising achievement. The headteacher has been steadfast in recent times and pursued the aim of getting the best for the pupils. A significant feature of the work of the headteacher has been the success in minimising the impact of the considerable upheaval resulting from staff changes and long-term illness. Staffing has now settled, a full leadership team is now in place and the school is moving forward quickly.
- The school is committed to ensuring equality for all pupils and making sure that discrimination of any sort is not acceptable. The uncertainties of staffing over recent years has hindered the ability of the school to achieve this aim but a settled staff team now means this is no longer the case.
- Effective and purposeful senior leaders work hard to check on the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. Leaders of Key Stages 1 and 2 are giving a clear educational direction which is raising achievement. A strategy for bringing standards up, particularly in Key Stage 1, is making good inroads into removing the legacy of underachievement from the past.
- The performance of staff is checked in accordance with requirements. Pay progression is very closely linked to each staff member's effectiveness. Arising from the regular appraisals of staff, good training opportunities are accessed to develop individuals' expertise in order to benefit pupils' education. The skills of teaching assistants have been enhanced and the school is in the process of implementing more effective management of their performance.
- The work of middle leaders is having a good impact on pupils' achievement. Subject leadership is good in mathematics. Achieving improvements in mathematics is a priority for the school this year. The recently appointed English leader has a clear vision and ambition for improvement, and is already taking steps to remove weaknesses in teaching and achievement. Leadership of the early years is good, ensuring provision helps children to make good progress so they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has been disrupted in the recent past, hindering the quality of teaching and support. Staffing has now settled and the progress of this group of pupils is now accelerating.
- An overhaul of the curriculum is beginning to re-ignite pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Good account is taken of pupils' interests and talents. Whole-school themes, such as 'Inspirational People' make effective links across a wide range of subjects. As one pupil said 'It's really exciting, learning about that man Armstrong who landed on the moon!' Although educational visits are promoted to add relevance to learning, limited use is made of the environment within the school grounds.
- Teachers promote successfully good levels of social and moral development through opportunities to work together harmoniously, including in school performances, assemblies and sporting competitions. The close link with the church and its parish builds in pupils a good sense of spirituality and the range of beliefs and faiths in modern society as well as the core values of Catholicism.
- The physical education and sport funding is used well to strengthen the breadth of physical education and sport provision. It is used not only to develop the expertise of staff through specialist support but also to widen the range of sporting activities experienced by pupils. Some of the funds pay for additional activities, such as swimming, and help to build sports partnerships with other schools.
- The local authority gives very effective support. Very good assistance has been, and continues to be, available to the headteacher and governors as they move the school forward. The local authority representative knows the school very well and offers astute guidance and advice as well as giving a frank and honest account of the school's performance and areas to improve.
- Parents who gave an opinion to inspectors were very supportive of the school. They appreciate the efforts of the headteacher to improve the school. The school has found it difficult to build close partnerships with some parents but is aware of the value of overcoming this barrier. Steps to listen to, and build bridges with, the parent community are imminent.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is extremely well led and managed by an astute and knowledgeable Chair. Governors bring a wide range of expertise to their role and a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They keep themselves well informed by rigorous checks made of the school's assessment and performance data. Some members make frequent visits to the school and listen to the views of staff, pupils and parents. The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met. It takes part in a wide range of training to maintain its effectiveness. Governors are involved fully in driving improvement. For example, their skilful management of finances includes checks on the achievement of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium and notes where it could

be better. Meticulous tracking of assessment data for these pupils enables governors to understand how the achievement of these pupils compares with similar pupils nationally as well as within the school. Governors have an informed view of the quality of teaching and have worked hard to stabilise the staffing team after a considerable time of uncertainty. They know how school leaders set targets for teachers, check on how well staff are improving their expertise, reward good teaching and have strategies to tackle any underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Good foundations are laid in the early years with a firm focus on the development of good social skills. Politeness and good manners are commonplace. It is rare for pupils to be unkind to each other. Records show incidents of racist comments and bullying are rare. This is because the school is successful in meeting the needs of individual pupils who struggle to behave well.
- Pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm for learning are generally good. The recent, improved approaches to learning which include linking subjects together, captures increasingly boys' interests and enjoyment of lessons. Behaviour is not outstanding because when activities are not pitched at the right level to challenge pupils they occasionally become distracted and even noisy. This affects the learning of others. However, pupils confirm that 'behaviour has got better and better' and that lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.
- The consistent approach to rewarding positive behaviour through, for example, recognising pupils by awarding the 'Star of the Week' helps to raise pupils' self-confidence and feelings of worth.
- Pupils take on responsibility well such as in the role of school councillor. They learn about democratic processes to help prepare them for later life through the election to these posts of responsibility and by giving all pupils a voice through the school council representatives. Good social and moral development is shown in the way pupils of different backgrounds get on well together and by their good behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe, including safe use of the internet and about the dangers of cyber-bullying.
- Pupils benefit from a very caring, supportive and safe environment. Pupils speak highly of the help they receive from the learning mentor and other staff when they have personal issues.
- The learning mentor, together with all staff, has raised expectations for pupils' attendance. It has risen quickly to be in line with the national average.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, while progress is accelerating quickly, it is not securing consistently good progress for all pupils. This is because, over time, staffing changes and disruption have limited pupils' overall progress. For some pupils, there are gaps in their learning that have not been removed.
- Pupils are responding well to an increase in expectations of them regarding the standard of their work. This is particularly evident in Years 1, 5 and 6 and in the early years. Tasks usually match their abilities, although for some, work is not hard enough and so their progress slows. This is partly because staff new to the school are still in the process of assessing each pupil's attainment and ability.
- The quality of the support provided for disadvantaged pupils and for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs varies according to the confidence and expertise of the staff concerned. As a result, the progress made by these pupils varies from better than expected to expected.
- Learning in English has strengthened. Pupils benefit from a well-structured approach to reading and writing which is bringing about improvement. In Key Stage 1, pupils are now developing a secure knowledge and understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) which in turn is helping them to do better with their reading and writing. In Key Stage 2, a stronger focus on promoting English grammar, spelling and punctuation helps pupils to remove gaps in learning that some pupils have because of the impact of frequent staffing changes in their past. Pupils are now reading more widely and with increased confidence.
- In mathematics, better planning and rising expectations give a clear focus on securing pupils' basic skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Pupils enjoy mathematics and benefit from using practical resources to help them see and understand concepts that are difficult for pupils of their age. For

example, pupils in Year 1 relish using counters and simple charts to help them to learn about fractions and different ways of sorting numbers.

- While pupils are benefitting from better teaching in English and mathematics, opportunities for them to develop their skills in other subjects remain narrow. This is a limiting factor in enabling pupils to reach the highest standards in reading, writing and in the application of mathematics.
- Marking is regular but varies in quality. Senior leaders are aware of this and are working hard to remove the differences. Some pupils benefit from constructive comments and guidance about how to improve their work but, at times, the pointers for improvement lack clarity. Increasingly, pupils are aware of their own achievement and what to do to reach higher standards. However, the depth of their knowledge of this is weak and hinders them in being able to see just how far they could reach.
- While relationships between adults and pupils are harmonious, the climate for learning in classes varies. For instance, high-quality work is not always celebrated. It is not always obvious to pupils to what standards they should aspire.
- The school knows that, in the past, boys have not done as well as girls. However, new strategies and themes are generating a greater interest from boys. As a result, they ask questions and seek answers for themselves and this is helping them to learn at a faster pace.
- Homework is a regular feature for all pupils in the form of reading, spellings, pieces of English and mathematics. Pupils are sometimes asked to create their own projects at home and this helps to develop their research skills.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- There is a legacy of underachievement in the school arising from the considerable instability in staffing. With a more settled staff team and improvements to the quality of teaching, pupils in Key Stage 2 are now making good progress. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2014 rose to be in line with the national average. However, standards attained at the end of Year 2 remained well below average in all subjects and progress was slow although the picture is improving. The difference between the standards reached by these pupils and pupils nationally is narrowing.
- While the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age in the 2014 national check on pupils' understanding of phonics was below average, there was a significant improvement on previous results. By the end of Year 2 in 2014, all pupils had caught up to where they should be.
- The achievement of the most able pupils across the school is accelerating but their achievement in writing and mathematics requires improvement. In Key Stage 2 in 2014, there was an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching standards that exceeded the national expectations for their age, although this proportion was smaller than the proportion nationally.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils in 2014 was good in Key Stage 2. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils at Year 6 in 2014 was above other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Their attainment was also better than other pupils in the school not in receipt of the pupil premium grant in reading and writing although not in mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in the school was better than that of other pupils nationally in reading and writing but not in mathematics. School leaders have already taken action to address this. Although disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 1 did not achieve well last year, they are now doing well because the quality of teaching has improved greatly.
- The progress and achievement of pupils with special educational needs has been disrupted by unavoidable key staff changes. Their progress has been slow in the past. Stronger leadership of provision and better teaching is now accelerating their learning and their progress is now good.
- A very large proportion of children begin school in the early years with very limited experiences of life and levels of development that are significantly below typical. As a result of good teaching, they make good progress. In 2014, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was just below average but improvements to this are already evident this year.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils enjoy reading and benefit from regular opportunities to do so during the school day. This is a key factor in the rapid progress underway. In writing, pupils at both key stages are benefitting from an increased emphasis to teach the basic skills of accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils are developing their confidence as writers although currently have limited scope to improve their skills by writing in a wide variety of contexts. Standards in mathematics are rising, especially in Key Stage 2, and are largely due to higher expectations of pupils.

The early years provision**is good**

- Visionary and hardworking staff, very effectively led and managed by a skilled and knowledgeable leader, give children in the early years a good start to their school life. Strong team work between staff means that children learn happily within a safe and secure environment.
- There is a good balance of activities on offer to children. Play is not just play, it is managed carefully to promote learning. Children benefit greatly from the significant investments in facilities for outdoor learning. Children develop skills well in all areas of learning within a stimulating and imaginative environment.
- A high proportion of children join the early years with skills that are significantly below those typical for their age. This is especially so in their communication, social and personal skills as well as their knowledge of the world around them. During their time in the early years, these deficiencies are addressed well. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. A wide range of activities enable children to play together, share and co-operate and improve their social skills. Skilled questioning and interactions led by adults develop children's confidence to talk and express their views and feelings. The relatively narrow vocabulary of a significant proportion of children is widened successfully. When children have difficulties with their speech and language, effective actions are taken by staff to help them to improve.
- The quality of teaching has improved over time and is now good. Although assessment systems have been refined to secure an accurate picture of each child's achievements, the school is aware that the needs of the most able children are not always met because their progress is not tracked rigorously.
- Good efforts are underway to encourage the involvement of parents in their children's education. Opportunities are increasingly being given for parents to come to school, for example by encouraging and welcoming parents' contributions to their child's records of progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119620
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	432123

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Victoria Ashfield
Headteacher	Juliet Walling
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2013
Telephone number	01524 65576
Fax number	01524 60588
Email address	head@st-josephs-lancaster.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

