

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Aldrens Lane, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 2DU

Inspection dates

16–17 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable, particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils' progress across the school is inconsistent. By the end of Year 6, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have too much catching up to do.
- The achievement of boys lags behind that of girls in almost every year group. Tasks set for pupils are not consistently challenging.
- The curriculum does not include enough opportunities for pupils to develop skills in depth in a range of subjects; neither does it fully develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- High staffing turbulence over the last few years has resulted in inconsistencies in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Leaders have not been able to drive improvements as rapidly as they would have liked.
- Leaders and managers do not always check the quality of teaching closely enough to ensure that pupils are making rapid progress.
- Leaders, including governors, do not always hold teachers stringently to account for the quality of their teaching and the progress pupils make.
- Assessments to measure how well pupils are achieving are not always accurate because teachers' expectations about what pupils can achieve are not high enough in some classes.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching in key stage 1 and Year 6 is engaging and leads to pupils making good progress.
- Provision in the early years is effective. Children are extremely well cared for and get off to a good start. The number of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average.
- Pupils behave well and understand how to keep themselves safe.
- The headteacher and senior deputy headteacher are clear about how to improve the school further and have ensured that a stable staff team has now been established to help them do this.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to accelerate progress and raise pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 3 and 4 and for disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations about the progress that all pupils should make
 - ensuring that work is set at the correct level so that pupils, particularly boys, have the correct amount of challenge to enable them to make good progress
 - extending opportunities across all subjects for pupils to acquire skills in depth and fully develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers, including governors, hold teachers stringently to account for the progress of all pupils
 - strengthening the monitoring of teaching to ensure that teachers are meeting the agreed expectations and that assessments are accurate in each year group, so that pupils make rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have been challenged in their efforts to improve the school by a range of different staffing issues. As a consequence, in spite of some successes in improving provision, pupils' progress is not yet uniformly good in all year groups because the quality of teaching is too variable.
- Leaders have not focused closely enough on regularly checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, expectations of what pupils should achieve are not always as high as they should be in each class and pupils' progress is not rapid enough in some year groups.
- Leaders, including governors, have not held teachers closely enough to account for the progress of pupils, particularly boys. Procedures to measure the performance of teachers are not always linked well enough to teachers' pay progression.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, while showing some improvement, is still inconsistent. This is because leaders and managers do not keep a close enough check on their achievement in each year group.
- The range of subjects taught is broad and balanced, but skills are not always taught in enough depth to ensure that pupils gain a range of knowledge in a variety of subjects. For example, there are limited opportunities to develop pupils' artistic or musical skills.
- Strong teaching and good leadership in the early years and key stage 1 have resulted in pupils making good progress. However, staffing issues in key stage 2 have hindered leaders' ability to bring about similar improvements until quite recently.
- The school promotes British values in some areas of the curriculum, and pupils have celebrated events such as the Queen's birthday and Remembrance Day. However, leaders are aware that this aspect of the curriculum is not fully embedded across the school and requires further provision.
- The spiritual understanding of pupils is strong. However, the school is aware that the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is patchy across the school and requires strengthening. Plans to improve this aspect of the school's work are being drawn up.
- The primary physical education and sport funding is used well. Pupils are taught by specialist coaches, alongside their teachers. Pupils have been able to access specialist dance and games coaches, and as a result, they say that they really enjoy these sessions and their skills have improved.

Governance of the school

- Governors are extremely supportive of the headteacher. As a group, they have been robust in addressing some challenging staffing issues over the last two years. However, they are still coming to grips with holding all teachers stringently to account for the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.

- Some governors have a good knowledge of external performance data that is presented to them by leaders. However, not all are aware of the achievement of current pupils in order to probe leaders about what they are doing to improve performance and raise standards.
- Governors have a good understanding of the financial position of the school, including how additional funding is spent to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and to enhance sports provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safety of everyone in school has an extremely high priority. Staff are well trained to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Policies and procedures are reviewed frequently to guarantee that all staff are always fully aware of their duty to keep pupils safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and they know whom to talk to if they have concerns or worries.
- The learning mentor provides good support for pupils who may have fears or anxieties. The school works hard to engage with parents and there are good relationships between the school and pupils' families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils, including boys and disadvantaged pupils, achieve as well as they should over time.
- Teaching is variable across classes. There are strengths in the early years, key stage 1 and Year 6, but there are weaknesses in Years 3 and 4. This is because expectations about what pupils should achieve are often not high enough, and consequently not enough pupils are working at the level expected for their age.
- Where pupils make good progress, teachers have good subject knowledge and question pupils effectively. They set work at just the right level for pupils' different needs and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, pupils who were working to design shelters in a 'rainforest' showed resilience and understanding.
- Where pupils do not make enough progress, it is often because there is a lack of challenge. Weaker teaching in the school is characterised by teachers spending longer than necessary explaining tasks and giving instructions to pupils. In mathematics, pupils are typically not given enough opportunities to use and apply their skills.
- Teaching in a range of subjects across the curriculum does not consistently engage pupils. Sometimes pupils are given activities that restrict the progress they can make. For example, they are not given enough opportunities to develop practical skills in subjects such as art, design technology or music.

- Good relationships are evident between adults and pupils and when pupils are engaged in learning, they are able to show high levels of concentration and independence. For example, in Year 6, pupils showed an excellent understanding of the relationships between characters in Michael Morpurgo's 'Kensuke's Kingdom'.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils are able to use their knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words and they say that they enjoy reading and being read to by adults. The developments in guided reading sessions in key stage 2 are showing some signs of improving pupils' comprehension skills.
- The quality of feedback to the pupils is generally good in English and mathematics; teachers effectively celebrate what pupils have done well and identify how they can improve their work. The effectiveness of feedback in other subjects is not as strong.
- Pupils receive English and mathematics homework regularly. Most pupils say that they enjoy homework and complete it each week.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are proud of their school and the vast majority enjoy attending every day.
- Pupils say that, on the whole, everyone gets along well together and incidents of bullying are extremely rare. They are fully aware that bullying can take different forms, including prejudice-based bullying. They say that if bullying did occur, it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Healthy lifestyles are promoted well. There are a number of sporting opportunities for pupils, including running a mile a day and lunchtime clubs. In addition, displays around school promote healthy eating through the healthy lunch club.
- Staff try to promote aspirations for the future through a careers week. Pupils enjoyed the opportunity to learn about a variety of occupations through visits to places of work such as a pizzeria.
- Pupils are given opportunities to take on leadership roles such as school councillors and sports leaders. This ensures that pupils can give their views about what is happening in their school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet, and older pupils told inspectors that they were aware of staying safe when using social media.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils feel that behaviour at playtimes and lunchtimes is good and has improved even further because of the use of 'play zones' at lunchtimes.

- There is a robust rewards system in place whereby children receive recognition when they have achieved well, showed good manners or helped others. Each week there are class 'VIPs' who take a leading role in the class and are given special treatment at lunchtimes.
- Occasionally, when lessons are not engaging enough, a small minority of pupils can become distracted. However, behaviour logs in school show that incidents of poor behaviour have reduced over recent years.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Children start school with skills and knowledge below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress through the early years and key stage 1. In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age at the end of Year 2 was broadly in line with the national average. A legacy of underachievement at key stage 1 has been successfully eradicated, which reflects some strengths in leadership over time.
- The outcomes of the Year 1 phonics screening check are in line with the national average and have improved over the last three years. This shows that the teaching of phonics and early reading is strong.
- The achievement of pupils in key stage 2 is inconsistent. Current assessment information shows that pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making insufficient progress, but pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 is accelerating.
- After a dip in 2015, the number of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics improved in 2016, but was still below the national average.
- Progress in 2016 for pupils in Year 6 was good for most pupils, but not as good for some lower ability pupils. In addition, not all of the most able pupils achieved the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. There is still some way to go to make sure that all pupils are achieving as well as they should because teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Boys do not achieve as well as girls. In most year groups, the proportion of boys attaining the expected standard for their age lags behind that of girls. This is because teachers do not always make sure that work is challenging or sufficiently engaging.
- Disadvantaged pupils perform as inconsistently as their peers in school, but in the 2016 national tests, their performance improved considerably due to improvements in provision. However, their achievement overall lags behind that of other pupils nationally at both key stages and remains a priority for senior leaders.
- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. However, the school is aware that too many pupils have been identified as requiring support for special needs because of poor previous performance when some teaching was inadequate in the past. Leaders recognise that because of improved teaching in Years 5 and 6, these pupils are now making much better progress. Similarly, improvements to teaching coupled with tighter assessment procedures in the early years and key stage 1 mean that fewer pupils are now being

identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities in the first place.

- In 2016, achievement in writing was much higher than in reading and mathematics. The progress made by pupils was significantly above the national average. This is because teachers in Year 6 placed a strong emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills, which paid off.
- Achievement in reading is not as good as in writing and progress was slow across key stage 2 in 2016. Leaders are aware of this discrepancy and have already begun to ensure that more opportunities for developing reading skills are used in all classes.
- Achievement in mathematics is improving over time. However, pupils are currently making slower progress in lower key stage 2 because insufficient opportunities are given to use and apply mathematics and apply reasoning skills in some year groups.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years provision is a strength of the school. Children start school with skills that are below those expected for their age and some children have particularly low speech and language skills. As a result of good teaching and a positive learning environment, they achieve well throughout their time in the early years.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception has improved over the last two years and in 2015 and 2016 was above the national average.
- The nursery is warm and welcoming. Children are encouraged to be independent, while being very well supported in their learning. For example, children particularly enjoyed a phonics session where they had to guess which musical instrument was sounding.
- Children settle quickly and make great strides with their learning in Reception. Consequently, the proportion achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is above the national average. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- The senior deputy headteacher has been relentless in her efforts to improve the provision in the early years over the last two years. Her efforts, along with those of the Reception teacher, have been successful. The environment is warm, welcoming and an exciting place to learn.
- Children are well supported by adults and excited to learn. For example, in Reception, children were able to pick a range of words from the outdoor sand and enthusiastically identify rhymes.
- Children enjoy learning outdoors and the school's efforts to develop forest learning are paying off. Nursery children visited the forest in the rain and were excited to shelter under the trees and hear the sounds.
- The procedures for assessing children's progress are effective. Teachers and other adults skilfully question and observe children while they are learning.
- Partnerships with parents are improving and parents feel that their children settle quickly. The school also has a good relationship with other nursery providers and therefore transitions are very smooth.

- Children in the early years are extremely safe. Policies and procedures to keep children safe are robust. Staff are vigilant in promoting children's health and well-being. Consequently, children are growing in confidence and have excellent relationships with adults.

School details

Unique reference number	119620
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10019813

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	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Victoria Ashfield
Headteacher	Juliet Walling
Telephone number	01524 65576
Website	www.st-josephs-lancaster.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	bursar@st-josephs-rc12.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support from pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average.
- There have been few changes to leadership and management since the last inspection. However, there have been a number of changes to the teaching staff.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in lessons, including one observation carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors listened to pupils reading. They looked at examples of pupils' work and observed pupils at lunchtime and breaktimes.
- The inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. They spoke to parents as they brought their children to school.
- There was one response to the online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaires.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' current progress across the school, the school's view of its own effectiveness, and how the school checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The inspectors checked the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and looked at records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Emma Jackson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rob Lakin

Ofsted Inspector

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