

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Darlaston

Rough Hay Road, Darlaston, Wednesbury, West Midlands WS10 8HN

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In recent times, pupils' progress in mathematics has fallen behind the rates seen in reading and writing. Standards have dropped and some pupils have left school without being properly prepared for the mathematics curriculum at secondary school.
- The school's new system for checking on pupils' progress is not well established. Furthermore, frequent changes of staff have led to inconsistent practice and some information about what pupils can do has been lost. Consequently, at times, teaching is not pitched at the right level.
- Currently, the quality of teaching varies too much from class to class. Teaching in some classes does not stretch the most able or offer sufficient support for the least able pupils.
- Until the current year, senior leaders and governors have not kept a close enough eye on academic standards.
- Leaders have not checked to see if specific funds for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or the pupil premium are being spent effectively.
- Several middle leadership roles are underdeveloped. The promise shown by newly appointed subject leaders has yet to be realised in full.
- The subjects of design technology and art have not been taught regularly.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has been quick to take action and is steering the school in the right direction.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing because teaching is more effective in these subjects. They have opportunities to apply their literacy skills in different subjects.
- Phonics teaching is effective.
- Pupils are well behaved and kept safe at school. They show respect and concern for others and are attentive in class. They gain a secure understanding of right and wrong.
- Provision in the early years is good. The youngest children do well in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6 in order to improve pupils' progress and raise their attainment in mathematics by making sure that:
 - teaching in all classes provides sufficient challenge for the most able and appropriate support for the least able pupils
 - information about what pupils already understand and can do is used to plan for next steps in learning so that pupils do not become confused by work or find it too easy
 - pupils are given more opportunities to apply what they know and to develop their reasoning skills
 - teachers and support staff get the opportunity to learn from effective practice in the school, and elsewhere, in order to develop a more consistent approach to teaching mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - school improvement planning is sharply focused on swiftly remedying shortcomings in teaching and learning
 - newly appointed middle leaders receive training and support in order to develop in their roles, make the most of their abilities and have a sustained impact on school improvement
 - the school's new assessment system is used to best effect so teachers know how well pupils are doing and can tailor their teaching to different learning needs
 - leaders and governors systematically check whether special educational needs and pupil premium funds are being spent effectively
 - the school curriculum provides enough design technology and art.

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

Requires improvement

- In recent years, leaders have taken their eye off teaching and learning. Instead, leaders have relied on teachers to carry on as before, despite changes to the school curriculum and assessment arrangements. Consequently, while some aspects of teaching and learning have continued to work successfully, staff have not kept up with the demands of the current mathematics curriculum. In addition, the regularity of leaders' checks on pupils' progress slipped, so the dip in mathematics standards went undetected. This is now being rectified. The acting headteacher and current leadership team have a good grasp of what needs to be done and have actively sought advice to help steer the school on an upward path.
- Middle leadership is improving rapidly but is still underdeveloped at this time and there is a need for further training and support. The local authority has provided useful advice this year, which is helping leaders to shape and implement newly formed action plans. This said, while improvement plans focus on the right areas, such as mathematics and assessment, there is scope to sharpen up success criteria and inject a greater sense of urgency.
- The whole-school assessment system is fit for purpose and leaders have ready access to reliable information about pupils' progress and attainment. They use this information to hold teachers to account and to advise governors about standards. However, it is early days with this new system and the way assessment is used in classrooms to inform teaching is rather hit or miss. Leaders are alert to this and have set clear targets for staff in order to improve the use of assessment and precision of teaching across the school.
- The school curriculum serves pupils well in some respects, but not all. The mathematics curriculum does not offer sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and to improve analytical skills. In addition, pupils have not been taught art or design technology on a regular basis, as these two subjects have been sidelined by other school activities. On the other hand, subjects such as reading, writing, science, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE) are taught well, with a clear progression of knowledge and skills across the school. After-school sports clubs are well attended. There is a twice weekly homework club for those pupils who are unable to access the school's online learning platform at home.
- Funds to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have been spent in line with their intended purposes, with mixed results. However, leaders have not routinely evaluated the impact of spending on pupils' achievement, so they do not have a fully informed view about what is working well and what could be improved.
- Specific funds for school PE and sport are put to good use. Pupils benefit from specialist sports teaching and this has improved their skills and the range of activities on offer.
- The school's values are rooted firmly in the school's Christian foundation and inclusive approach to education. Values such as compassion, honesty and respect guide the

school's work and have a marked impact on pupils' behaviour and outlook on life. They leave school with attitudes that will serve them well in the years ahead.

Governance of the school

- Current governance is effective. However, until the current year governors were not keeping a careful watch on the school's performance. This meant shortcomings in teaching and underachievement in mathematics went unchecked. Governors now understand the school's current position and have put routines in place to make sure they stay informed about standards and the school's effectiveness. Inspectors' conversations with governors and checks on paperwork from governing body meetings found that governors now have access to a wealth of information and ask lots of questions. Individual governors hold specific responsibilities, meet with staff and check on different aspects of the school's work in order to stay up to date and inform their plans for school improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All statutory requirements are met and pupils feel safe at school. Staff have received training about the risks children can face and know what to do if they have a concern. School records show that staff have acted in a proper and timely manner when responding to concerns that have arisen. Information about pupils is kept secure but is also available to the right people at the right time when needs be.
- Links with other agencies such as social services and healthcare staff work efficiently. Medicines in school are managed well and first-aid treatment is provided quickly when required.
- All the proper checks on staff and visitors are carried out and recorded correctly and the school site is kept secure. Any unexplained pupil absence is followed up quickly by office staff and everyone on the team understands their duty of care. Parents are kept suitably informed about safety matters and how they can support the school's work at home.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching presents a mixed picture across the school. Currently, the level of variability from one class to another is too great and this leads to erratic progress, especially in mathematics.
- The school is only now starting to get to grips with the demands of the current mathematics curriculum and some teachers are more ahead with this than others. In Years 2 and 6, for example, there is some very effective teaching that enables pupils to build secure conceptual understanding, apply what they know and move forward in their learning at a fair pace. Elsewhere, practice varies, both from one year group to another and within the same year group depending on who is teaching that day.

- Various circumstances, mostly outside the school's control, have led to several changes of teaching staff and some posts being filled on a temporary basis. Inevitably, this has caused some disruption to teaching. Furthermore, assessment routines are not yet firmly established and some information about what pupils have already learned has been lost when staff have left the school. Given the shortcomings in the mathematics curriculum this has led to some pupils being given work at the wrong level for their learning needs. For example, in some instances, the most able pupils work through lots of the same sort of work rather than being prompted to apply their knowledge and skills to new situations. In other cases, less-able pupils are kept busy with simple tasks or become confused because they do not understand their work.
- Teaching in subjects other than mathematics is more consistent and of a better quality across the school. The teaching of English grammar is brought to life in some very creative ways that grab and hold pupils' interest. During this inspection, older pupils were required to think very carefully about the meaning of words, how they can be used and the effect on the reader. The quality of questioning from teaching staff was superb and pupils readily engaged in lively debate that reflected their genuine interest in language. In many cases, teachers inject imagination and energy into their teaching while managing pupils with good-humoured and calm authority.
- Indeed, relationships between adults and pupils are positive and a strong work ethic is apparent in all classrooms. Teachers manage pupils with skill, sensitivity and effective authority and it is unusual for learning to be disturbed by poor behaviour.
- In all year groups, teachers and support staff pay close attention to the way pupils present their work. Handwriting is taught effectively and inspectors' checks on pupils' books revealed that the school's focus on joined legible writing, accurate spelling and careful presentation is yielding positive results.
- Teaching in English, PE, science and RE is well organised and enables pupils to build up skills and knowledge in a sequential and logical way. As a result, they enjoy these subjects and pupils of all abilities experience feelings of success.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils grow in confidence at school because adults treat them fairly and with respect. An inclusive culture means that no one feels left out and discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. Pupils enjoy learning and even though there is room for improvement in aspects of mathematics teaching, pupils still apply themselves to whatever task they are given and understand the link between effort and achievement.
- Pupils are taught about different types of bullying and what to do if it happens. Pupils, staff and parents report that it is rare. In fact, the pupils who spoke with inspectors could only recall one instance of bullying and said that it had been dealt with swiftly and properly. Pupils are confident that adults would always stop any bullying or unkind behaviour, should it occur in the future. They also feel that adults always have time to listen to any concerns they might have and trust them to help.

- Some pupils do take on positions of responsibility, such as peer mediators and school librarians. In these roles they can be relied upon to help out and other pupils appreciate their assistance. However, pupils are not regularly involved in making decisions that help to shape aspects of school life.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In class, pupils are attentive to their teachers and keen to do their best. They do what is asked of them and work hard.
- On the playground, at breakfast club and in other informal situations, pupils mix easily and happily with one another. They are at ease with adults and their peers and show respect for others and for the school rules. In the dining hall, pupils display good table manners and chat with enthusiastic politeness. School uniform is adhered to and almost all pupils arrive on time and with a positive attitude towards the day ahead.
- A small number of pupils do present some challenging behaviours and school staff manage these pupils exceptionally well. Leaders work with families and outside experts to make sure they get the necessary guidance and support. Consequently, exclusions are very rare and pupils are able to make the most of school.
- Attendance rates, which have tended to be just below average over time, are rising and the school's most recent attendance figures are broadly in line with the national picture. The level of persistent absence has reduced and, in the current year, more than a third of pupils have more than 98% attendance. This positive direction of travel has been driven by the school's range of incentives to encourage regular attendance and leaders' increasingly successful work to challenge unnecessary absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils do not make as much progress in mathematics as they should and, in recent years, standards have dropped. In both 2015 and 2016, pupils moved up to secondary school without being fully prepared to start the key stage 3 mathematics curriculum.
- Currently, progress in mathematics across key stages 1 and 2 remains a concern. Pupils make strong progress in some year groups but then mark time in other year groups. Furthermore, numerous changes of staff have led to inconsistent approaches to teaching which have served to magnify the shortcomings in the mathematics curriculum.
- Progress in reading and writing is stronger and, in the main, pupils do well. In 2016, for example, the proportions of pupils reaching or exceeding age-related expectations compared favourably with national figures. It is clear that the school's early focus on securing pupils' literacy skills is paying off. In the Year 1 phonic screening check, the majority of pupils reached the expected standard for their age and teaching further up the school builds further on this positive start. Reading is promoted in lots of interesting ways and pupils have many opportunities to practise and develop their writing in different subjects. Consequently, they acquire the skills they need to

experience success, not just in English but also in other subjects where literacy skills are required.

- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities varies, sometimes quite considerably. There is no doubt that pupils with complex needs make some excellent progress at this school, in response to the attentive support provided. Pupils with more moderate learning difficulties respond well to the extra support provided by teaching assistants. Nevertheless, classroom teaching sometimes fails to capitalise on this. This leads to some of these pupils struggling to cope with work or being left to get on with simple tasks that are well within their abilities. Again, this is more apparent in mathematics than in other subjects.
- Like other pupils, the most able pupils and those classed as disadvantaged reach higher standards in reading and writing than they do in mathematics. Pupil premium funding is spent in line with its intended purposes, with success more evident in subjects such as English and PE than in mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Adults set high and consistent expectations for children's behaviour and learning and are good role models. Consequently, children know what is expected from them, feel safe, grow in confidence and behave well.
- Most children start school in either Nursery or Reception with levels of knowledge and skill below those typical for their age. Even so, the majority reach a good level of development before starting Year 1. This good progress is the result of effective teaching and attentive support and care in this part of the school.
- In addition to good teaching, staff provide strong pastoral support, both for children and their families. Efficient communication between home and school enables parents to contribute and receive information about their children's learning on a regular basis. In addition, staff are quick to seize upon children's interests and experiences as routes into new learning. All of this helps to ensure that classroom activities are pitched at the right level so that children make the most of every day at school.
- Staff also look to other early years settings in order to share training and check their assessments of children's achievements. This outward-looking approach helps to keep staff up to date and alert to new ideas, which ensure that the provision continues to develop and improve.
- While parts of the indoor and outdoor classroom areas present as rather barely resourced, there is no shortage of imagination in lessons. Adults and children are able to bring even the barest corner of the classroom to life with creative language, role play and a sense of mischievous fun that inspires all to enjoy learning, cooperate with others and do their best.
- While leadership in the rest of the school has had some ups and downs, the leadership of early years has remained on a more even keel. Specific funds to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with particular learning or medical needs are spent effectively. The early years leader has an accurate understanding of the provision's strengths and development areas. She rightly acknowledges that

information in the children's good-quality learning journals could be put to better use when planning next steps in learning.

School details

Unique reference number	104235
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10032671

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Dalton
Acting headteacher	Mrs Ann Thompson
Telephone number	0121 568 6496
Website	www.st-josephs.walsall.sch.uk
Email address	postbox@st-josephs.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 September 2012

Information about this school

- St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The school offers early years provision for nursery and reception-age children.
- By the end of the inspection, the school met requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

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

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books, and considered test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch and breaktimes, during an assembly and when pupils were moving about the school site and attending breakfast club.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders and a local authority adviser. The lead inspector met with one governor and had a telephone conversation with the chair of governors.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 11 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and nine free-text comments. The inspectors noted these and also spoke with parents, pupils and staff during the inspection.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement, evaluations of the school's performance and numerous policy statements. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, training, the quality of teaching, external advice, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Rzeznik	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Prince	Ofsted 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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