

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey

Wheatland Lane, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH44 7ED

Inspection dates 10–11 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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

- Parents, pupils and staff all agree that St Joseph's has improved quickly in the last year. The main reason for this change in the school's fortunes is the high expectations and high quality leadership of the headteacher. Her mantra of 'only the best is good enough for St Joseph's' is working.
- Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and in particular mathematics has improved and in some cases is now in line with the national average.
- Pupils' achievement in other subjects has also improved well, for example computing, science, physical education, art and history. Not enough more-able pupils achieve the highest levels in the different subjects.
- There are still gaps in the attainment of some groups of pupils, particularly gaps between those who are supported by the pupil premium group and those who are not supported by it.
- Teaching still requires improvement because some groups of pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Teaching has improved significantly over the year, because of effective leadership from senior leaders.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching and provision in Reception and Nursery are good which makes sure that the majority of children are ready for Year 1.
- High quality assessment systems identify precisely what pupils need to learn next.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved over the year and is now good. In particular, changes to lunch times have decreased incidents of poor behaviour.
- Governors are highly knowledgeable, effective and provide high quality challenge and support.
- Leaders at every level in the school have led effective improvements to teaching, the curriculum and to pupils' behaviour and safety.
- The school's work to keep pupils' safe has improved. In particular, the good work to reduce bullying, negative attitudes and name-calling has been successful.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and with a group of teachers who lead subjects. In addition they met with five members of the governing body, the teacher in charge of provision for special educational needs (SENCO), and the pastoral support manager.
- Inspectors met and spoke with pupils around the school and held longer discussions with three groups of pupils. In addition to observing pupils' behaviour in class, they also observed at lunch and break times, at the start and end of the day and around the school, such as in hymn practice.
- Some parents had difficulty accessing Ofsted's on-line (Parent View) survey and there were only 13 completed returns. An inspector spoke with some parents at the start of both inspection days to gather their views.
- Inspectors observed teaching in 11 lessons during this inspection, but also took into account evidence about teaching over the year by looking at pupils' work from last academic year, looking at the school's records of teaching and by using evidence gathered at previous visits to the school.

Inspection team

Allan Torr, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Rowland

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is an average-sized primary school and most of its pupils are White British.
- Pupil premium is funding provided by the government to support pupils who are looked after by the local authority or those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils at St Joseph's supported by the pupil premium grant is over two thirds, which is more than double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support (this used to be called School Action and School Action Plus) is around 19 per cent, which is above the national average. There are no pupils with a declared disability.
- Three pupils are educated off site in alternative provision at Riverside Primary School and New Brighton Primary School.
- The breakfast club is managed by the school.
- The school met the national floor standards for 2013 and 2014 (these are the minimum level of attainment and progress expected by the government).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of the more-able pupils so that there is a further increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in each year group by:
 - challenging them to master the knowledge, understanding and skills in each subject
 - deepening their knowledge of vocabulary, spelling and grammar.
- Close the gap in attainment between pupils supported by the pupil premium and those who are not, while maintaining rising attainment.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The main reason for the change in the school's fortunes and the rapid improvement over the last year is the highly effective leadership by the headteacher. She has high expectations for the pupils in this community and refuses to accept anything that is not the best. She has driven changes that have:
 - increased pupils' achievement
 - improved teaching
 - increased staff attendance and morale
 - improved pupils' behaviour, attendance and safety, which are now good.
 The headteacher's evaluation of what the school does is highly accurate.
- The headteacher manages the performance of staff well. She, and a range of staff, monitor teaching and groups of pupils' achievement frequently and it is done in a supportive way. Alongside ambitious targets, there is an effective system of training, working alongside staff, and providing advice and guidance, all of which enable all staff to achieve their best.
- The headteacher has uplifted the staff. She has given them confidence and ownership of the subjects they lead, so they all feel valued as leaders. Senior and middle leaders have evaluated their subjects by looking at data, national reports and surveys, good practice, finding out pupils' views and looking at changes to the National Curriculum. They have been given the opportunity to present their improvement plans to governors and to lead staff training and importantly to follow up on information they have gleaned from their monitoring, which has improved teaching in their subjects.
- The teacher in charge of physical education (PE), for example, now works across the school providing specialist teaching and an increased number of sporting and extra-curricular clubs. He has taken charge of the sport premium (a grant of money from the government to improve pupils' achievement in sport) which has led to a tripling of participation in sporting activity, including competitive sport, from 20 per cent of pupils to 60 per cent; and has led to an improvement in sporting skills. His action plan to improve PE is well conceived and is based on challenging the most-able to become highly skilled in sport.
- The curriculum is improving quickly. Previous inadequacies in a lack of enough science, computing, PE, history, geography and art have been tackled effectively and now pupils are taught the full range of subjects in greater depth to enable them to develop their skills and knowledge. In history for example, the curriculum enabled pupils in Year 3 to get a good understanding of ancient Greece by comparing and contrasting different city states; developing a sense of time by placing events and people on a time line; and evaluating first- and second-hand sources. This helps them to draw conclusions about the past and deepens their thinking about people who lived at that time. Pupils taught in alternative provision also get a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The curriculum enables pupils to have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to develop British values of democracy, tolerance and rule of law. They develop respect for different people regardless of their race, religion, sexuality, gender or appearance. Teachers use role models effectively to teach respect for others, such as disabled Olympians and gay sporting icons. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to reflect about the world through assemblies, but also to reflect on what is right and wrong. Teachers also enable pupils to develop a sense of citizenship. Last year, for example, they taught about democracy through visits to the town hall and visits by the mayor; and a Year 6 visit to parliament in Westminster. There are opportunities to raise funds for local and national good causes and chances to be involved in community projects.
- The local authority has provided effective intensive support over the year. Over the last few months the support has reduced, because the school has shown it can improve itself. As a result, the local authority now challenges the school to improve further, rather than doing much of the work for it.
- The safeguarding and protecting of children is good. Leaders have refurbished the entrance of the school to improve security. After a recent rodent infestation, cleaning routines were changed and some of the classrooms were refurbished, which have improved safety on site. Staff and visitors are vetted appropriately and there are robust policies in place to protect children, for example, in the use of telephone calls with social services to follow up cases where pupils may be vulnerable to harm persistently. There are good systems in place to liaise with domestic abuse experts to protect pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors that met with inspectors are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They have a thorough understanding of education and the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They challenge leaders in a positive way and help to set the ethos and culture of high expectations at St Joseph's. They have held the school to account for how well the pupil premium is spent, debating with leaders whether

employing staff or buying resources is the best and most effective use of the funding. As a result, the gaps in attainment between pupil premium pupils and their peers are closing quickly and governors have a close watch on pupils' progress to make sure nothing slips. Governors are now meeting their statutory duties, such as making sure the Equality Act is implemented in school and leaders foster good relationships between different people and discrimination is eradicated. The website now meets national regulations. Personal education plans are in place for pupils looked after by the local authority.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils, parents and staff commented that behaviour had improved significantly over the year and is now good. The behaviour logs show a big reduction in serious incidents such as refusal to go to class, swearing, and disobedience to adults.
- One of the main reasons for the improvement, according to staff and pupils, is the very effective changes made to lunchtime arrangements. Each pupil has a set place at mixed-age tables. Those eating hot meals eat alongside those with packed lunches and all start eating together, after saying grace. The staff and pupils have noted a significant improvement in social skills as pupils learn to eat family-style around a table. At the start of each week, pupils sign up to one of the many clubs on offer for that week and they can select other clubs the week after, meaning they are able to attend a full range of different clubs. As a result of these changes, and training for staff on duty at lunchtime, behaviour has improved significantly and is now good.
- Around school pupils walk calmly, are polite and friendly and take care of their surroundings, for example, picking up coats and tidying equipment. They also look after each other through different schemes, for example older pupils playing with and looking after younger pupils. There is no evidence of graffiti in books and their work is well presented, indicating a level of care about what they do in lessons.
- In most lessons, most of the time, pupils make good progress because they behave well and respond to adults' instructions. Virtually no teaching time is lost because of having to manage and reorganise the class. Only in a few lessons a small number of pupils were off task, chatting about things other than their work.
- The atmosphere in lessons is good, with pupils listening intently, getting on well with each other during group and talking time, and showing keenness to work and improve.
- There are some pupils who find it difficult to behave and to conform. The staff manage these pupils well and try to get to the cause of the behaviour, rather than just reacting to it. Pupils' behaviour in alternative provision is improving because of the specialist teaching they receive about how to control their emotions.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. As a result, pupils have a good understanding about how to stay safe, such as e-safety, and road and bicycle safety and when using the Internet. Parents who spoke with inspectors felt their children were safe at school and pupils agreed. One aspect that pupils could do with a deeper understanding about is how to stay safe from extremist, unlawful and intolerant behaviour such as forced marriage, gangs, knife crime, female genital mutilation and radicalisation.
- Pupils that spoke with inspectors said bullying and name-calling had reduced significantly and now they are rare. They confirmed that, unlike a year ago, pupils would not be teased for their appearance, for example having ginger hair or wearing glasses, or for wearing pink. As one pupil commented 'it's only a colour who cares whether it is a boy or a girl who wears it?' This is because in the last term the teachers have done a lot of work on different types of derogatory language such as racism and homophobia. Pupils that spoke with inspectors said if someone came from another country or had a different religion, or who was disabled; or who was gay they would be safe at St Joseph's and would be accepted despite any differences with others.
- The number of pupils who have a large proportion of absences from school has halved because of the school's effective work. Attendance has risen and is now close to the national average. Pupils who leave school are tracked carefully to make sure they have not gone missing. The attendance of pupils at alternative provision is high.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching at St Joseph's has improved quickly over the year. The main reason why it requires improvement rather than being good, is because in lessons, the more-able pupils do not achieve as well as they could in all subjects. There has been, over the year, a great deal of targeted teaching for lower-attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs. As a result, their needs have been met and they have made

quick progress, particularly in mathematics and in reading. However, the needs of the most-able have not always been met as well, so there have been missed opportunities to challenge them to deepen their thinking or master their knowledge and apply their skills.

- One of the main reasons for the improvement in teaching is the good quality marking and feedback from teachers and adults. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said they now had a clear idea of exactly what they needed to do to improve. They have the chance in 'fix-it time' to correct mistakes, improve their work or to answer the teachers' challenges before moving on to the next piece of work.
- Another reason for the improvement is the very thorough and effective system of assessment. For example, teachers assess pupils' phonic ability every few weeks (phonics is a way of teaching children to read by linking the letters to the sounds they represent in words). They then group pupils according to the results and provide very tailored teaching to improve pupils' reading before moving on to the next assessment. There is a similar assessment system for mathematics. Pupils' knowledge and skills are assessed in a particular area of mathematics which leads to pupils being grouped according to the results. Teachers then plan lessons and activities to tackle and improve the errors pupils made.
- Teachers and adults assess constantly throughout lessons. Adults, including teaching assistants, ask a good range of questions that makes most pupils think and takes their knowledge and understanding forward. Adults listen carefully to pupils' answers to gauge pupils' understanding before moving on. Where teaching is good or better, teachers target questions to individuals and groups of pupils so that they are all challenged. Teachers monitor the work of the whole class during lessons to check for their understanding.
- Most pupils respond well to teaching most of the time and show that they are keen to learn. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that in particular their teaching in mathematics, history, computing, PE and art is good. Teaching in science has improved. Pupils conduct more experiments and learn more science than previously. Their work for example shows plenty of opportunities to predict, draw conclusions from evidence, identify the fairness of a test, record information in different ways and to learn scientific concepts practically.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well and are making a difference. They follow well-crafted teaching programmes to target gaps in pupils' knowledge. In one mathematics lesson, for example, an assistant worked with a pupil with special educational needs. Because of her explanations and careful teaching, he managed to correct the errors he had made the previous day and became successful in adding two two-digit numbers.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The main reason why achievement requires improvement is because a below average proportion of pupils attains the higher Level 3 by the end of Year 2 and the higher Levels 5 and 6 by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. The number of pupils attaining the higher levels has risen, but there is still some way to go to make sure that in all subjects more-able pupils achieve as well as they can. In particular, few pupils have the rich vocabulary, deep knowledge of spelling patterns or grammar in their writing they need to reach the highest standards.
- A year ago there were significant gaps across the school between pupils supported by the pupil premium and those who were not. This amounted to being over a year behind their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap has now closed. It continues to close quickly, because teachers have identified the needs of this group of pupils and have created teaching to tackle any lack of knowledge or skill that they have through frequent and good quality assessments. Teachers use and follow up the assessments carefully and as a result, this group of pupils is now making good progress. Pupils looked after by the local authority are similarly achieving well as are those educated off site in alternative provision, because their needs are being met.
- There has been significant improvement in pupils' reading skills. Pupils in Year 1 split up unfamiliar words capably and confidently when reading aloud, into different phonic sounds that helps them read the text. A higher than average proportion reached the expected level for their age by the end of Year 1.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils are keen and eager to learn. They are quick to learn new knowledge and skills which is paying off in better achievement. In 2013 less than a third of Year 2 pupils attained the level they should for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014, this more than doubled to 61 per cent, which means substantially more pupils have made good progress from their starting point at the end of Reception than in previous years. In particular, pupils' achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 1 is now good.

- Across the year groups, pupils' achievement is improving quickly. It proved a little too late for Year 6 who have just left the school, however, because a well below average proportion attained the expected level for their age in reading. However, it is a different story in mathematics where almost every pupil made expected progress.
- Pupils' achievement in other subjects is improving quickly. In computing for example, Year 1 pupils are adept at using technology to capture photographs, sounds and activities and to load them into their work via a Quick Response (QR) code. In a mathematics lesson, they worked out sequences of numbers and then used a QR code to assess whether they were right or not and to correct their answers and their thinking.
- Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. One-to-one reading, for example, has raised pupils' reading ages closer to where they should be for their age. Teachers' high quality assessments identify pupils' needs every few weeks. Pupils and parents are involved in setting targets and in identifying what they need to do to improve. Expectations for this group are high and no excuse is given for a lack of progress. The assessments lead to detailed plans of how to tackle any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The early years provision

is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills and levels of development that are lower than is typical for three- and four-year olds. They make good progress, so that by the end of Reception a majority, close to the national average, have attained a good level of development and are ready for Year 1. There are few children that are more able, but there is good provision for them which means they receive teaching which is more challenging and they make good progress.
- Teachers waste no time and immediately assess children as they enter either Nursery or Reception. Right from the start, teachers carefully craft challenges and activities that tackle any weaknesses that have been identified in the assessments. In the nursery for example, it was clear children were unsure about recognising numbers zero to 9 or ordering numbers. In every part of the nursery, inside and out, cleverly designed activities engaged children in working on their counting skills and their knowledge of numbers. In one corner children counted sticks and cones, in another they ordered green bottles that were knocked off a pretend wall, in the 'shop' they counted pennies, in the mud kitchen they found and recognised numbers, and inside they matched a number to the number of squares on a shape. This culminated in an exciting sing-along involving ducks, with children counting backwards from five and children having made good progress in their counting skills.
- Children are taught how to value and celebrate differences between people. There are in Reception for example words for zero to 10 in Polish with a photograph of a Polish member of the class with a caption that he would help others to count in Polish. Scanning a QR code leads to a video clip of him counting to 10 for other children to copy. As a result the Polish child feels totally welcome in the class and valued and the other children learn about differences. Children also learn about different types of family and about celebrations. Children's work, for example, showed some good work around the Chinese New Year, learning about different customs and celebrations, but also showed a celebration for British values, such as commemorating Remembrance Day.
- Staff work well with parents. In addition to frequent communication, there are opportunities for parents to learn about how the school teaches phonics, to contribute to children's learning through the use of 'wow' sheets, and to speak with staff.
- Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully and progress is monitored thoroughly by leaders. There is a thorough system in place to moderate judgements which have been verified by the local authority. The assessment is used to make improvements throughout the year. For example in 2013, leaders noted that writing lagged behind other areas of learning and so created effective action plans to change the curriculum to focus more on the skills of writing. As a result, in 2014 pupils' writing development was improved.

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	105073
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	441697

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eleanor Allman
Headteacher	Kathryn Vernon
Date of previous school inspection	11 April 2013
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