

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Priory Road, Chalfont St Peter, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire SL9 8SB

Inspection dates

11–12 July 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a good and improving school. The school's central values, expressed as 'love, learn, grow' are integral to the school's ethos and evident in its day-to-day life.
- The temporary co-headteachers, with the support of the highly effective governing body, have sustained improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school is a harmonious community where pupils and staff are mutually respectful. Pupils are very well cared for and their behaviour is extremely good.
- Pupils are making good progress due to the effective teaching and their highly positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' rates of progress in reading and mathematics are generally consistent. There is some variation in achievement in writing across the year groups, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Children in the early years enjoy learning and achieve well in the stimulating indoor and outdoor areas.
- The curriculum is very well planned and strongly develops learning in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils benefit from attending a range of out-of-school clubs which broaden pupils' horizons and knowledge in subjects as diverse as tennis, cheerleading and archery.
- Pupils acquire a secure base in phonics through the early years and key stage 1. However, some lack confidence in applying their phonics skills when attempting to read or write unfamiliar words.
- Pupils take advantage of the many opportunities to contribute to school life and willingly take on responsibilities.
- Parents are extremely positive about all aspects of the school, including the leadership and the extent to which their children are cared for and kept safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' achievement in writing, especially that of the most able, by:
 - embedding the effective practice evident in most lessons
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are consistently challenged.
- Eradicate the variability in pupils' application of phonics skills in Reception and key stage 1.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have successfully sustained the school's overarching vision. Parents greatly appreciate the school's values. Typical of their comments was, 'My son is taught in a nurturing and caring environment where the school's ethos of love, learn and grow is a key part of everyday school life.'
- The acting co-headteachers have tirelessly sustained the drive for improvement that was well in hand when the previous headteacher left at Easter. Middle leaders share their forthright aspiration to ensure that pupils do as well as they can.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. Many of their numerous positive comments referred to the continuing improvement under the temporary leadership, including, 'The strong leadership team has continued to lead the school since the previous head left at Easter.'
- All members of staff play a part in moving the school forward. A strong sense of collective responsibility shines through. For example, teaching assistants took the initiative and created a 'rain forest' area with resources to support pupils' learning about environmental issues.
- Leaders rigorously check the quality of teaching. Their approach is highly supportive. At the same time they adopt a 'nothing less than good is good enough' approach. Teachers are eager to improve within the culture of reflective practice that permeates the school. Staff welcome feedback and benefit from the guidance of their colleagues as well as from leaders. They take advantage of the carefully chosen additional training opportunities.
- Newly appointed middle leaders are supported very well in developing their roles. Typically, they are guided by a 'buddy', a coach and a mentor. They become part of an extended leadership team and gain insights into how the school runs and the work of senior leaders.
- Additional funding is spent wisely and effectively. For example, disadvantaged pupils benefit from one-to-one reading sessions, a homework club, and from working over six-week periods in small groups with a visiting theatre company. Such activities successfully promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem, their oral communication, and literacy skills. Funding for physical education and sports is used to make sustainable improvements. Pupils' skills are improving through, for example, their participation in local competitions, new sports such as handball, and more effective teaching of gymnastics.
- The rich and vibrant curriculum is imaginatively designed to provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to excel. Progress in English and mathematics is not made at the expense of the wider curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning in a broad range of subjects, including science, computing, art, drama, music and humanities. This is evident in the pride and interest that pupils show in the wide-ranging displays, and in the 'discovery' projects that they complete every half term.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly through day-to-day lessons, assemblies and an effective personal, social and health education

programme. Pupils are successfully encouraged to be reflective. For example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 participate in 'retreat days', where they discuss ideas such as fairness and justice.

- Moral development is embedded in classroom culture and underpinned by the school's ethos. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced through high-quality art and music events, 'one world' days, visits and visitors. The mutual respect and courtesy that typifies the relationships between adults and pupils reinforces pupils' social development.
- Pupils gain a secure understanding of fundamental British values and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, their studies include comparing democracy in ancient Greece and in Britain today. Pupils learn to be responsible and accountable as they elect and serve as members of the school council and junior leadership team.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. Governors have a wide range of experience and expertise, and relevant skills, that enable them to oversee the work of the school effectively. They are eloquent and knowledgeable about how the school's performance compares with the national picture. A governor produced a very useful synopsis of all the published assessment information to provide colleagues with a succinct overview.
- Governors rigorously hold leaders to account. They carefully consider leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching and keep a sharp eye on the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement. They are quick to identify any anomalies, and governors' minutes show that they routinely ask insightful questions.
- Members of the governing body gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They keep informed through focused visits during the school day and talk to subject leaders, staff and pupils. Subject leaders make presentations at governors' meetings where they outline their improvement plans and respond to governors' questions.
- Governors manage the performance of the acting co-headteachers effectively and are aware of staff's salary progression. They ensure that additional funding is used as intended and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements, including checks on all adults to confirm their suitability for working with children.
- School leaders have developed a clear culture of safeguarding. The well-written and detailed safeguarding policy ensures that all staff are clear about what constitutes a safeguarding concern and what actions are required.
- Staff understand that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. They are well trained and are vigilant in recording any concerns.
- The systems to protect vulnerable children are effective. The safeguarding leader keeps detailed records and is tenacious in following up concerns and working with

other agencies. For example, pupils who are missing or absent from school are tracked carefully.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Strengths in teaching and learning are generally consistent across the school. Underpinned by excellent relationships, teachers have high expectations of what all groups of pupils should achieve during lessons.
- The teachers in parallel classes in each year group plan together well. This ensures consistency. At the same time, teachers react immediately to pupils' responses during lessons. Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables them to pick up on pupils' misconceptions, change tack, and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Lessons are well paced, routines are smooth, and resources well-organised, so time is generally used well. The timetable is not set in stone, which means teachers have the flexibility to adapt lessons, modify grouping and continue with the same thing if pupils are thoroughly engrossed.
- Teachers set a variety of interesting tasks that engage, intrigue and challenge pupils. For example, pupils were fully absorbed as they used their knowledge of symmetry to explore how this applied to three-dimensional shapes.
- Teachers use questions effectively. They encourage pupils to develop answers and use a wide range of vocabulary. Probing questions encourage deep thinking in lessons across the curriculum. In a geography lesson, for example, pupils were asked, 'How does this information tell us about the survival of humans in the Arctic?'
- Teachers give pupils time to review their learning and reflect on the characteristics of effective learning that were suggested by the junior leadership council. Pupils are committed to improving and make good efforts to present their work neatly. They concentrate well when working individually or cooperatively.
- Effective, systematic teaching means pupils develop secure phonic skills. There are some inconsistencies, however, in the extent to which teachers check how pupils use their phonics skills in their day-to-day reading and writing. Sometimes, pupils' attention is not drawn to simple mistakes.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers provide stimulating contexts for writing, with good opportunities for pupils to practise, consolidate and extend their skills. Where teaching is most successful, pupils benefit from time to proofread and edit their work. They develop an understanding of how authors work and that things don't have to be right first time. In some lessons, however, the teaching of writing is not so consistently effective.
- Teachers follow the school's calculation policy which is effective in building understanding in mathematics. They use a good range of strategies to help pupils build on their basic numeracy skills to acquire skills in more complex areas, such as ratio, probability, and algebra. Very occasionally, pupils who find mathematics difficult do not have enough support to help them move forward.
- Reports to parents provide a good picture of their children's progress. They include a commentary on pupils' personal development and progress across the curriculum. This

is supplemented by detailed information about how pupils have achieved against explicit 'I can' statements in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's attention to pupils' personal development and welfare. All those responding to the inspection survey, Parent View, agreed that their children are kept safe and well-cared for. Their comments included, 'Teachers go the extra mile to make the children feel cared for', 'The teaching methods, enthusiasm, knowledge, care, kindness and patience is faultless', and 'St Joseph's is a wonderfully caring and nurturing school.'
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school. Those spoken to during the inspection were very keen to explain to the inspection team how well cared for and safe they felt in school. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are confident and self-assured, with very positive attitudes towards their learning and school life.
- From an early age, pupils discuss and debate issues increasingly maturely. In Year 1, for example, pupils were reflecting sensibly on the pros and cons of keeping animals in zoos, while pupils in Year 5 were maturely debating environmental issues regarding the damming of rivers. A Year 6 pupil explained how their annual retreat gave 'opportunities for reflection and allow us to go into greater depth about religious education'.
- Pupils develop an increasing understanding of how they can contribute to their own progress. Members of the junior leadership team suggested cartoon characters as symbols of effective learning. Throughout the school, pupils were observed referring to pictures such as 'Independent Ian' and 'Resilience Rose' as they discussed how they were getting on with their work.
- Pupils have a genuine sense of collective responsibility. This is evident in their support for various charities and in the way that they spontaneously support their classmates. They welcome new pupils and help them settle in. Year 6 take on leadership roles such as play leaders. They offer excellent role models for other pupils in their highly positive attitudes to learning and mature behaviour.
- Pupils are very clear about how to stay safe both in and out of school because of the very clear guidance that they receive. For example, pupils explained how important it was to stay safe when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school uses a range of successful, integrated strategies to promote good behaviour. Teachers and support staff ensure that pupils enjoy being at school and learning. The school celebrates and recognises achievement and success.

- When working away from the direct supervision of teachers, pupils work just as hard. Teachers place great importance on developing the skills pupils need to learn independently through discussion in pairs and small groups. This helps pupils learn quickly how to work productively and collaboratively.
- Pupils move calmly around the school building and during break and lunchtimes when they have fun playing happily. Pupils say there is no bullying, although they understand what forms bullying might take, and are confident any incidents would be treated seriously and effectively.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, attend well. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing, with some striking improvements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress has accelerated in the last two years. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are now above the national average. This year, the proportion doing so in all three subjects was well above the national average. The most able pupils typically fulfil their potential and reach a greater depth in their learning. Around twice as many pupils in Year 6 reached a high standard in writing than the national average last year.
- The school's success in helping pupils to overcome barriers to learning is evident in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's assessment information indicates that these groups of pupils generally build well on their starting points.
- Pupils at an early stage of learning English rapidly become confident in communicating in the language. A parent of a child who arrived from Europe two years ago speaking no English remarked, 'He now speaks English better than his home language.'
- The school's meticulous assessment information indicates that, in most cases, pupils are making at the least the progress the school expects of each year group. This is also evident from pupils' books. There is some variation, however. Progress is more consistent in reading and mathematics, but is patchy in writing. The achievement of the most able pupils varies across year groups.
- Pupils' progress in phonics has accelerated recently and the results of recent phonics checks in Year 1 have been above average. That said, some pupils across key stage 1 are not confident in using their phonics skills when reading and writing unfamiliar words.
- The older pupils are enthusiastic and confident readers. When discussing their reading preferences, pupils spoke maturely about the literacy devices and vocabulary authors use to draw in their readers.
- Although rates of progress in writing are inconsistent across the school, highly effective teaching in Year 6 means that pupils rapidly develop impressive writing skills. They typically use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, and their handwriting is often immaculate. Some pupils write with great flair. Among many examples, one pupil, after learning about creating suspense, wrote, 'A delicate flurry of white powder blanketed the rooftops, covering dark, whispering secrets.'

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. The proportion reaching a greater depth in their knowledge, understanding and skills has been above average for the last three years. This is evident in their current work, which shows that pupils are increasingly adept at applying their numeracy and reasoning skills to solving mathematical problems.
- Pupils are now making good progress in science, reaching at least the expected standards. Published results last year were skewed by inaccurate assessment, which has now been resolved. Pupils demonstrated good skills in art, music, history, and geography. For example, in assemblies, pupils sang extremely well with excellent pitch, expression, and dynamics. In history, pupils showed secure research skills as they referred to different sources of evidence when finding out about ancient hill forts.
- Pupils are well-prepared for secondary education and beyond. This is because of their secure basic skills and increasing depth of understanding, together with their positive attitudes to learning.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of early years is effective in ensuring continued improvement. Leaders have an accurate picture of the strengths and areas for further development. They have taken appropriate action to develop the provision since the pre-school was amalgamated into the setting.
- Parents are extremely positive. Among many similar comments were: 'My daughter started at pre-school and now she is finishing Reception as a very happy girl, with good manners and behaviour... She has learned and grown so much [in] every subject', and 'St Joseph's has had an immediate positive impact on my child's overall development and learning since pre-school. We have seen our child develop more confidence socially and grow a real love for learning.'
- Effective teaching ensures that pupils make good progress and reach above-average standards by the end of Reception. Adults take every opportunity to engage with children as they are learning. Through playing alongside children, adults promote children's social development, promote their independence and extend their language and communication skills.
- Parents much appreciate that staff ensure that children are kept safe and feel safe. Children's welfare is paramount. Children respond extremely well to the nurturing environment and behave very well, developing a love of learning.
- All areas of learning are promoted successfully in the vibrant and well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas. Children are encouraged to be curious and work things out for themselves. At the same time, adults are quick to step in and teach them directly when appropriate.
- Assessment procedures ensure a smooth transition from pre-school to Reception. Adults keep a close track on children's development and their school records show a strong improvement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from highly individualised support. Additional funds are used effectively for extra language tuition, which results in children developing self-confidence and improving their oral and literacy skills.

- Children generally make a good start in developing phonic skills. However, there are some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of the teaching across the groups that children work in for phonics. In some sessions, although pupils really enjoy the lively games involved, there is not the same attention to developing specific phonics skills as there is in the more successful sessions.
- Improvements to the provision have ensured that children are now leaving Reception with the essential skills and positive attitudes that equip them well for learning in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	110477
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10024522

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	440
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Dry
Co-headteachers	Karen Ford and Trish O’Kane
Telephone number	01753 887743
Website	www.st-josephsprimary.bucks.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-josephsprimary.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support through the pupil premium is well below the national average.
- The majority of pupils are White British. Pupils with an Asian heritage make up the largest minority ethnic group.
- The school meets the government’s floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Early years provision consists of two pre-school classes, where children attend from the age of two, mostly on a part-time basis, and two Reception classes where children attend full-time.
- Following the departure of the previous headteacher at Easter 2017, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher were appointed to lead the school jointly for the summer term. They are known as co-headteachers. A new headteacher will take up the post in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed activities in all year groups. Most observations were undertaken with the co-headteachers.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and a member of the local authority.
- Meetings were also held with pupils to discuss their views on their learning and well-being, and with parents to gain their views about the school.
- Inspectors heard pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 6. They talked to pupils at break times and in the lunch hall, in lessons and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documents, including information on pupils' performance across the school; school improvement plans; the school's evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment; governors' minutes and curriculum plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of books to see what progress had been made across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors took account of 129 responses to the Ofsted parent survey, Parent View, and the results of the inspection questionnaire completed by 29 members of staff.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joyce Lydford	Ofsted Inspector
Patricia Wright	Ofsted Inspector

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