

St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

School Street, Birtley, Chester-le-Street, County Durham, DH3 2PN

Inspection dates 17–18 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding due to the progress they make from broadly average starting points. The school knows each pupil extremely well and is highly effective in meeting their needs.
- Teaching is outstanding and pupils receive this consistent quality of teaching over time across the school. Teachers have high expectations and pupils' handwriting and presentation are exceptional.
- Teaching assistants provide high quality support to pupils both in and out of the classroom. Consequently, pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make outstanding progress.
- The rich curriculum provides a wide range of exciting learning opportunities, both in and out of school, which broadens pupils' horizons. Leaders acknowledge that even more could be done to provide pupils, particularly the more-able, with more opportunities to learn independently.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils play extremely well together. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and say there is no bullying. Their work ethic in class is excellent. They are industrious and they always try to do the best they can.
- The headteacher provides dynamic but supportive leadership. She has been instrumental in supporting staff to drive up pupils' standards and improve the quality of teaching. She is, in return, exceptionally well-supported by all staff and a skilful deputy headteacher.
- Governors also, are extremely supportive in all aspects of the school's work. They have been a contributing factor in strengthening the leadership of the school and know the school extremely well. The governing body challenges leaders at all levels and consequently standards have risen and teaching has improved.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. He observed groups of pupils working with teaching assistants and specifically listened to Year 3 pupils read and other pupils in class.
- The inspector talked to a range of pupils, including some members of the school council, about their work and play.
- The inspector met with five governors as well as teaching staff, including subject leaders and the headteacher. He also had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection and examined staff questionnaires. The school's parents' and pupils' surveys were also studied.
- The inspector observed the overall work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's current data about pupils' progress and records relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance.
- He also looked at other evidence including displays, the school's website and work representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

David Shearsmith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average sized junior school.
- An average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and children of service families.
- An above average proportion of pupils is supported at school action. An average proportion of pupils is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of pupils is of White British Heritage.
- The school has achieved the Healthy School status, the Basic Skills and the Gateshead Sports Mark awards.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for pupils, particularly those who are more-able to learn independently, by:
 - ensuring that there are sufficient learning opportunities that involve problem-solving and investigations, so that pupils can accelerate their own learning
 - making sure pupils know how to be successful in their learning, in order that they can check on their own progress and reach even higher levels in their work
 - marking pupils' work so that it is more focussed on pupils achieving the next level, and then giving them sufficient time to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding because all staff know pupils exceptionally well. The work set is tailored to meet pupils' differing needs from the moment they step into the school. Consequently, all groups of pupils make outstanding progress.
- The school sets itself challenging targets for pupils' achievement and is on track to meet and in some cases, exceed these. Teachers rigorously track pupils' progress through regular meetings to ensure that they are achieving the school's high expectations.
- Pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average and sometimes better. They make outstanding progress across Key Stage 2 to reach standards that are significantly above average by the time they leave Year 6. This has been sustained over time and school data show this continuing outstanding picture.
- The teaching of reading is a particular strength of the school. Pupils' progress in reading is outstanding due to the school's regular guided reading sessions. This strong focus on reading, and good quality support from teaching assistants, has produced standards that are significantly above the national average by the time pupils leave.
- Standards in writing are also significantly well above the national average. The school has developed a systematic approach to writing and this has been instrumental in raising standards. Pupils have a very strong understanding of grammar.
- The school is currently revising its teaching of mathematics to ensure that pupils maintain their high standards. Standards in mathematics are significantly above the national average and progress is outstanding.
- Pupils entitled to the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make outstanding progress. The school has rapidly closed the gap between the performance of this group of pupils and all other pupils in the school, and these pupils are attaining above the national average. The school is particularly successful in ensuring that all pupils have equality of opportunity to achieve well.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs also make outstanding progress. The leader for this aspect of the school's work provides excellent guidance and support to staff to ensure that pupils' needs are met well. Rapid response and support, when they enter in Year 3, ensure that pupils are on track to succeed. Consequently, they reach standards well above those of similar pupils nationally.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding over time because the school is highly effective at meeting pupils' needs through very effective planning. Teachers are also very successful at involving pupils in learning through the outstanding use of working with a partner. They use information and communication technology (ICT) to structure lessons creatively.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Their questioning skills are excellent and consequently, are effective at accelerating pupils' progress. In a lesson on fractions, the teacher's careful questioning to ascertain what pupils knew, coupled with very skilful teaching, enabled pupils to make outstanding progress.
- Where pupils are involved in investigations and problem-solving, they accelerate their own learning. In a Year 6 class, pupils made outstanding progress in exploring ways they could solve word problems. In another lesson, where learning was more directed by the teacher, overall progress was not as rapid because more-able pupils had to work at the same pace as others.
- In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher was very explicit about how to be successful when writing a letter of complaint. Pupils made outstanding progress because they were able to check on their own learning as they wrote the letter. This is not always the case. As a result, more-able pupils

do not always achieve as well as they might in some lessons.

- Teachers diligently mark pupils' work, particularly writing and make very positive comments which promote pupils' confidence. This encourages pupils to work even harder. As a result, pupils' progress is generally outstanding. However, some comments do not always enable pupils to achieve higher levels in their work, particularly in mathematics. They are not always given sufficient time to improve.
- High quality teaching assistants provide excellent support for pupils with specific needs. In a Year 4 writing lesson, less-able pupils were given excellent support. A pupil, who returned during the lesson after working out of class, was quickly and effectively supported with their learning and made rapid progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school because they say learning is fun. Teachers very effectively involve pupils in learning and as a result, they are highly motivated to succeed. In all lessons seen, pupils were keen to learn. They work exceptionally well together in lessons both with a partner and in group work.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school was exemplary. They play well together at playtimes and support each other exceptionally well. As one pupil commented, 'Everyone gets along with each other and no one is left out'.
- The curriculum enables pupils to have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe in a wide range of situations. Visits and visitors, such as the police and the fire brigade, mean that pupils are able to articulate many different ways of keeping safe.
- Pupils also have an excellent understanding of what constitutes bullying. They confidently stated that bullying never occurs and any friendship problems were sorted out by themselves or, as a last resort, with staff.
- Attendance is above average. The school has very good systems that encourage pupils to attend. They are usually punctual and are very apologetic if they are late.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a great strength of the school. Pupils are well-mannered and are very proud of their school. Relationships are outstanding in this harmonious, friendly and caring school. It is highly recommended by parents.
- Pupils readily take on responsibility both in and out of school. They have 'Fair Trade Managers' who run the school tuck shop. The school council has also been part of a project to improve a local park. In addition, the school's 'Green Team' is involved with ensuring that the school is ecologically friendly.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's high expectations and ambition for the school have been instrumental in improving teaching and raising standards. She is exceptionally well-supported by a very skilful deputy headteacher and a very committed and strong team of staff.
- Teaching has improved through high quality training. Very effective use of checks on the quality of teaching ensures that any additional support is provided for staff. The school rigorously and regularly checks on pupils' work in books and their targets. This, coupled with high expectations and challenging targets for teachers, has helped to improve the school's overall effectiveness from good to outstanding since the last inspection.
- The curriculum provides rich and extensive support for pupils' learning. A wide range of out-of-school activities support the school's drive for improvement and helps to develop a range of other skills in pupils. They participate enthusiastically and are particularly successful in a wide range of sporting activities. Spanish is taught across the school and all Year 5 pupils are learning to play the violin.

- The school has a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils receive equality of opportunity. It is particularly effective at meeting pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils achieve well and no one falls behind. Pupils stated that no one is left out of any activity.
 - The school has excellent systems to ensure that pupils are safe and secure, and safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
 - The local authority has provided good and consistent support to enable the school to improve its performance further.
 - Effective communication with parents, through texts and the school's extensive website, ensures that they feel part of the school. Parents are very positive about the school and value the opportunities given for them to participate in school events. The school's regular newsletter, 'Junior Times' written by the pupils, provides parents with an exceptional insight into pupils' learning.
 - A very wide range of partners supports the work of the school. The school capitalises on these extremely well and they enrich pupils' personal and academic development. Links with local businesses provide pupils with exceptional opportunities to develop their understanding of business and enterprise.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences are extensive and underpin their personal development. There are strong links with the local parish church. Links with countries abroad, such as Uganda, also provide pupils with an excellent understanding of other cultures.
 - **The governance of the school**
 - A highly skilful, encouraging and very challenging governing body provides excellent support to the school. It has strengthened the leadership of the school and enabled the headteacher to drive improvement. The governing body knows the school well, including its data. Governors regularly visit the school so that they are aware of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They ensure that money is spent wisely and check carefully on whether it is making a difference to pupils' progress, particularly pupil premium funding. Staff are appropriately rewarded for their performance, both in and out of the classroom. Governors are dedicated and well-trained, particularly in safeguarding.
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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	108388
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	403064

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Gallagher
Headteacher	Christina McDermott
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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