

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Upton

Moreton Road, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside, CH49 6LL

Inspection dates 9–10 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
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.

- Leadership and management over the last two years have not been good enough to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well.
- Pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is not sufficiently well developed.
- Middle leaders, especially those responsible for English and mathematics, are yet to play a full role in improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- In 2013, pupils' attainment in mathematics and writing at the end of Key Stage 2 was well below average. At the end of Key Stage 1, it was well below average in mathematics.
- Pupils' progress is not consistently good across all year groups.
- Teachers do not always have the highest possible expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, and the activities set in class do not always match the skills and abilities of all pupils, especially those of the most able.
- Marking is not consistently good across Key Stages 1 and 2, and pupils do not always know how to improve their work.
- Pupils, especially in Key Stage 1, have too few opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects other than in English.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards attained by pupils in reading by the end of Year 6 have been above average for the last three years.
- Leaders are determined to improve standards, and in 2014 standards rose, especially in Key Stage 2 and in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and in 2013 the standards they achieved at the end of Year 6 was better than that of non-disadvantaged and matched the national average.
- Pupils feel safe and enjoy learning. Their attendance is above average and improving.
- The teaching of phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) is good. Pupils' performance in the national phonics screening check has been above average for the last two years.
- The leadership and management of the early years provision are good. By the end of the Reception Year, a higher proportion of children than nationally achieve or exceed the skills expected for their age.
- Most parents are very positive about all aspects of school life. They regularly attend celebration assemblies and say that behaviour is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons across all year groups, as well as the teaching for small groups of pupils, and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons and separately with the headteacher.
- Inspectors considered 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own surveys of parents' views. A meeting took place with a representative from the local authority school improvement service. Inspectors considered 25 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- Various school documents were examined. These included development plans, data on pupils' progress, records of pupils' attendance, the school's review of its own performance, as well as its checks on the quality of teaching, reports produced by the local authority to the governing body, records of behaviour and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Williams

Additional Inspector

Susan Walters

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is smaller than average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- All early years provision is full time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Most teachers, including the assistant headteacher, are new to the school since the previous inspection, as are a number of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- A breakfast club and after-school service operates from the school site, both of which are subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress is consistently good or better and they achieve the standards of which they are capable:
 - ensuring that teachers always have the highest possible expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - ensuring that activities in class match the skills and abilities of all pupils, including those of the most able
 - making sure that marking is consistently good across Key Stages 1 and 2, and that pupils always know how to improve their work
 - ensuring that pupils, especially in Key Stage 1, have the widest possible opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects other than in English.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders, especially those responsible for English and mathematics, are fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - providing pupils with more first-hand experiences of the cultural diversity evident in Britain.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Over the last two years, senior leaders have experienced a period of instability which has had an adverse impact on standards attained by pupils. Most staff are new to the school since the previous inspection, and up to half of all teachers have been appointed this academic year. Though senior leaders have taken appropriate action which has enabled the school to turn a corner and improve standards, leadership and management have not been good enough to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good.
- The subject leaders responsible for English and mathematics are very enthusiastic about their work and the training that they have had to support them in their new roles. They are increasingly involved in scrutinising the quality of work in pupils' books and reporting on this. However, their work to improve the quality of teaching and to monitor and report on pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has yet to be fully developed.
- The school's new curriculum is well on its way to being fully implemented. It covers a wide range of topics, many of which are supported by visits to places of interest, including zoos, museums and the local church. The curriculum is further enhanced through residential opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 2 and activities after school. Mathematics and reading are promoted well across the curriculum. However, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to practise their writing skills across all subjects.
- Most aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils work exceptionally well together and enjoy collecting for various charities. Opportunities are provided for pupils to learn to play musical instruments, such as the clarinet and flute. Their take-up of after-school clubs for choir and knitting, for example, is high. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through assemblies, and learning about Christianity and other world faiths. However pupils' knowledge of life in modern Britain is limited because too few opportunities are available for them to have first-hand experience of its culturally diverse nature.
- Despite the need to provide more activities that challenge the most able pupils, the school is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all. For instance, through good use of the pupil premium funding, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school have narrowed.
- The school's systems for monitoring the quality of teaching enables senior leaders to provide guidance and training to teachers on how they can be more effective, and to provide support where teaching is not yet good. Teachers are held to account by targets being set that are linked to improving the standards attained by pupils.
- Staff and managers have benefited from a wide range of training and professional development. As a result, they know what the school needs to do to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This has been demonstrated in, for example, the improved standards attained by pupils this year, especially in mathematics.
- Local authority support has been at the request of the headteacher. Most recently this has included helping the school to use data effectively to, for example, ensure the effective assessment of the performance of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school takes care to ensure that it has effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils and all statutory requirements in this respect are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well trained and have a range of relevant skills to bring to their various roles. They are fully aware that pupils' progress needs to be better, and that their targets need to be more challenging. They scrutinise the information that they receive on pupils' performance and the quality of teaching and their understanding of what the school needs to do to further improve is continually developing.
 - Governors know that the small group teaching activities offered to disadvantaged pupils, as well as the homework club is, in most Year groups, eliminating the gap between their performance and that of other pupils in the school.
 - The information presented to governors by senior leaders on teachers' performance is improving. They use this to ensure decisions about increases in pay are justified. They are increasingly diligent in their monitoring of the performance of the headteacher.
 - Governors ensure that the primary school sports fund is used very effectively. They know that sporting activities at lunch time and after-school clubs in basketball, gymnastics and athletics are helping to improve the health and well-being of pupils, and that work with physical education specialists is helping to improve the skills of staff in teaching sporting activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They enjoy coming to school and are courteous and polite to adults and to each other. Pupils are smartly dressed, take pride in their school and in the presentation of their work. They are especially keen to take on board responsibilities as, for example, office monitors and play leaders.
- Pupils behave sensibly while moving around the school. Their good behaviour helps to ensure that lunch times and breaks are orderly, and contributes well to the calm and peaceful environment of the school.
- The school's work with families and the daily check on punctuality and attendance is much improved since the previous inspection. This has helped to ensure that this year pupils' attendance is above average and improving.
- Pupils are of the opinion that behaviour is good most of the time, as are the majority of teachers and parents and all governors who spoke with inspectors. However, pupils say that sometimes a small minority of their classmates do not listen carefully enough to their teachers. Inspection evidence, including a close examination of the school's behaviour log, reveals that behaviour is typically good, but on occasion, there are lapses when teaching is not fully engaging or when teachers do not make it absolutely clear how they expect pupils to behave.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they know that they can talk to any member of staff if they have any concerns. They say that bullying rarely, if ever happens and that everyone knows how the school's behaviour policy works, because they were part of the consultation that led to its development.
- Pupils have a good understanding of most forms of prejudice and know that people should not be treated differently because of where they come from or what they look like. As a consequence, incidents of name-calling are rare.
- Pupils have a good understanding of cyber-bullying. They know to always make sure that the websites they visit are safe, never to open 'pop-ups' or attachments, and to always seek the advice of an adult if they are ever unsure of any of their on-line activities.
- The school's work focusing on the social and emotional aspects of pupils' learning provide many opportunities for pupils to talk and learn about safety issues. Assemblies provide opportunities for visitors from the fire and police services to come to the school to talk with pupils about the dangers associated with Bonfire Night and Halloween.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teachers do not always have the highest possible expectations of what pupils can achieve. Activities in lessons do not always enable them to achieve to the very best of their ability because teachers sometimes set work that is too easy. Consequently, pupils' progress is inconsistent across different year groups and the most able pupils do not always attain as well as they should.
- Most pupils are very articulate, enjoy learning and talk with confidence about their work. However, they are not always sure about how they can take the next steps in their learning. This is because marking is not consistently good across Key Stages 1 and 2 and some teachers do not indicate to pupils clearly enough how they can improve their work.
- Pupils are increasingly provided with opportunities to practise their writing skills across the curriculum, especially in Key Stage 2. This has contributed to pupils' improved achievement in this subject. However, there is still a need for a strong focus on how to support pupils in developing their skills in writing, especially in Key Stage 1.
- The school's recent initiative on improving teaching in mathematics and the additional training that has been available to teachers has helped pupils to gain confidence in applying their skills to various problem-solving activities. This was evident through discussions with pupils about their work, and in their books, many of which contained good examples of them using their mathematical skills to, for example, canvas the opinions of their classmates to produce surveys, measure rainfall and plot weather patterns.
- Effective mathematics teaching was exemplified when the class teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge as she challenged pupils to develop their mathematical language through the use of terms such as 'value', 'contrast' and 'systematically', while skilfully developing their understanding of

mathematical concepts.

- The majority of pupils listen very carefully to what their teachers have to say, and are eager to answer questions. This was the case in a very effective English lesson, where pupils were invited to pick out key information from their class reading book about one of the main characters. They were told they should be able to infer certain points from a close reading of the text. By the end of the session, pupils demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the text and worked out the meaning of unfamiliar words, such as 'furtive'.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- After a period of several years of pupils' attainment being well above average at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2, standards in reading and writing, and most significantly in mathematics declined in 2013. This was due to significant staffing changes across the school, most of which have now stabilised.
- The school's own data show that standards have improved in 2014, especially in mathematics and in Key Stage 2. Pupils' overall performance also improved in Key Stage 1, and is now broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By the time pupils left Year 6 in 2013, their progress in reading and writing was average, and below average in mathematics. Pupils' progress has improved in 2014, but is not yet consistently good across all year groups.
- Inspection evidence and the school's own data show that pupils' performance in writing in 2014 was better than in 2013 at the end of Key Stage 2, with an average proportion attaining the highest levels in this subject. Attainment has also improved at the end of Key Stage 1, with slightly more pupils attaining the highest level in this subject.
- Pupils are now making good progress in mathematics in most year groups, and are attaining well. This is because senior leaders have focused closely on this subject, providing extra mathematics teaching across the school and enlisting the support of specialists to train teachers to help to raise standards. The school's own data show that by the end of Year 6 in 2014, pupils' attainment in mathematics was well above average.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught well, and pupils' achievement in reading is good and was well above average by the end of Year 6 in 2014. Pupils are encouraged to read widely, and are familiar with a range of authors. Pupils who read for inspectors said that they liked to read in class and at home. Less confident readers use a range of strategies to help them to read new words, this includes breaking words up and sounding them out.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are very effective in ensuring that any gaps between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are narrowed. In 2013, disadvantaged pupils performed at least as well as other pupils in the school in reading, writing, and mathematics and their overall performance matched that of all pupils nationally. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2014 was not quite as good, but their progress across the school was good.
- Pupils with disabilities or special educational needs make good progress across different year groups, often from very low starting points. This is due to teachers' and teaching assistants' effective teaching, and the regular monitoring of pupils' progress.
- The school's work with the most able pupils has improved, as evidenced by the increased proportion of pupils attaining the highest levels in mathematics in 2014 national tests. However, more needs to be done, especially in Key Stage 1, to ensure that these pupils are always challenged in lessons to achieve to the very best of their ability.

The early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the early years provision is good, and has improved since the previous inspection. This is because the early years leader and her staff plan effectively together to ensure they provide children with many opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and discuss their ideas with each other and with adults.
- Children enter Reception classes with the skills and abilities expected for their age. The good links that early years staff have with an adjacent Nursery service, as well as the good care and support children receive, help to ensure that they make good progress and achieve well. A higher proportion than nationally enter Year 1 with the expected or better than expected skills and abilities for their age.
- Children form good relationships with each other and staff, engage readily in various areas of learning and

behave well. They quickly become confident in their learning and develop clear routines.

- The high expectations that adults have of children ensure they develop their vocabulary well, learn to work together harmoniously and fine-tune their counting skills. This was exemplified well when children enthusiastically engaged in a dancing and counting game. When the music stopped, they quickly found a partner to work with them on their counting activities, and skilfully used an interactive computer programme to work out the differences between their numbers.
- Early years staff work well with parents. Those who spoke with inspectors said that they are kept well informed about their children's progress and that they are happy that they are learning in a caring environment in which they are looked after well.

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	105068
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	448284

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Graham
Headteacher	Julie Pierce
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2009
Telephone number	0151 677 3970
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