

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Beaconsfield Road, Sudbury, Essex, CO10 1JP

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leadership and management require improvement. Although the school is improving, leaders and governors have not yet ensured teaching is always good. They do not check that pupils of the same age in different classes have similar preparation for the following year. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers' checks of what pupils already know are not always accurate, so new tasks can be too hard or too easy, especially for the most-able pupils.
- Teachers' application of the school mathematics policy is inconsistent. It does not always enable pupils to make good progress in this subject.
- Although teachers use technical vocabulary accurately, they do not check sufficiently that pupils understand or use it themselves.
- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. Boys' achievement in reading and writing is improving, but it is still below where it should be because tasks do not inspire them to learn well. Too many pupils, capable of harder work, are allowed to take an easy option because their attitudes to learning are not consistently good.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to work things out for themselves and deepen their knowledge.
- Provision for the early years requires improvement. Although early years provision includes a wide range of interesting activities, children have too little opportunity to follow their interests or find their own way to work out answers. This limits their preparation for Year 1 and their achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher and newly appointed head of school are clear about the school's strengths, what needs changing and how to go about it.
- Governance is increasingly effective. Governors are now asking more probing questions about pupils' achievement, which is helping to improve the education pupils receive.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils' safety is given high priority. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. Their parents agree.
- Effective support and additional programmes means that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour towards one another, staff, visitors and their school is good.
- The school creates a 'family feel' and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Links with other schools, particularly the partner school, are beneficial to staff and pupils.
- The partnership with parents is strong and growing. Most parents who stated a view would recommend the school to others.
- Pupils benefit from the wide range of activities and subjects offered in a vibrant curriculum.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in 10 lessons, which covered all year groups and a range of subjects. Most observations were carried out jointly with the executive headteacher or head of school.
- The inspector met with: the executive headteacher; the head of school; other staff with responsibilities; members of the governing body, parents and pupils; and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work and heard pupils read.
- The inspector considered documents about the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed by parents in discussions, letters and in 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. He also took account of 16 responses to the questionnaire returned by staff.

Inspection team

Bob Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of girls, nearly two thirds, is higher than average.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- Depending upon numbers in each year group, pupils may be taught in mixed-age classes. Currently, the youngest pupils in Year 1 are taught with children in the Reception Year, while the eldest of Year 1 are taught with pupils in Year 2. The youngest of Year 5 are taught with Year 4, and the eldest with Year 6. Pupils in Year 3 are taught as a discrete class.
- A large majority of pupils are White British, which is more than average.
- An average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and a similar proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals or with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs daily and a weekly 'toddlers' club'.
- Since the previous inspection, all class teachers are new. The head of school took up her appointment on 1 May 2015, about three weeks before the inspection.
- The school is in partnership with St Edmund's Roman Catholic Primary School, Bury St Edmunds. Both schools continue to have their own governing bodies, but key staff from St Edmund's work at St Joseph's for part of the week. This includes the executive headteacher, the assessment coordinator and the business manager.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress by making sure that:
 - teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and use this information to provide tasks that are neither too hard nor too easy and that pupils choose appropriately challenging work
 - pupils understand and use technical vocabulary well in their oral and written responses
 - teachers motivate and engage boys in reading and writing
 - teachers ensure that pupils are given opportunities to think for themselves
 - in the early years, children are encouraged to develop independence and the confidence to try things out for themselves.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching by making sure that:
 - checks are rigorous and enable pupils to make good or better progress
 - checks ensure that pupils of the same age who have learned in different classes have no gaps in their learning and understanding when they move to the next class
 - leaders check that staff apply consistently the school's learning policies, especially for mathematics, in order to accelerate pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The period of instability and staff changes has meant that leaders' actions to improve teaching have had to restart when new staff have come on board. This has slowed the school's efforts to raise achievement and create a culture in which good behaviour and teaching can flourish.
- Some staff do not always know their pupils' prior learning levels accurately, and so do not pitch work at the right level of difficulty. Others do not understand and follow the school's learning policies. These things have an adverse impact on pupils' achievements.
- Checks on teaching by leaders have not been rigorous. Leaders do not ensure that pupils of the same age in different classes receive access to a similar curriculum. The subjects taught meet statutory requirements but this lack of effective checking means that pupils of the same age can enter the next class with gaps in their learning. This affects the school's work to provide equal opportunities for pupils to learn. However, there is no discrimination in other areas of school life. Pupils from all backgrounds and abilities work harmoniously together. Different groups of pupils including ethnic minority groups and those who speak English as an additional language, all benefit from specialist tuition to ensure they have equal opportunities to be fully included in learning and everyday school life.
- The executive headteacher and new head of school have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are determined to improve the quality of education provided. The sense of purpose that is evident means that staff are focused fully on improving the school.
- Work with the partner school and other local schools, and the support of the local authority, are good. Expertise and training derived from these partnerships are beneficial. The talents and skills of individual staff are now being recognised, nurtured and used to the benefit of all pupils.
- The school has introduced a new system to check pupils' progress and is using a range of methods to compare results to ensure they are accurate. Extra help, based on this information, is given to pupils if they are falling behind. This work is beneficial but is too recent for the full impact to be gauged.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a wide range of school activities, including philosophical discussions and lessons about moral issues. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They understand right from wrong, and why rules are important in a community. Elections to the school council teach them about democracy. Pupils appreciate fundamental British rights, for example citing the inequalities females face in some countries.
- Pupil-premium funding is used effectively for disadvantaged pupils. Eligible pupils receive help tailored to their needs and access to a wider range of learning opportunities, which accelerates their progress.
- Sport is a strong element of the curriculum. The additional sports funding is used well. For example, pupils benefit from coaching expertise to improve sporting techniques. This has increased pupils' participation in a wider range of sports and increased their understanding of the importance of energetic activity.
- Parents are seen as valuable partners, and pupils benefit from the good relationship that exists. Parents receive high-quality information from the school to enable them to support their children's learning. Learning conversations, involving pupil, parent and teacher, ensure everyone understands what each pupil has achieved and needs to do next.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet statutory requirements. All necessary checks and procedures are in place, for example to prepare for visits.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are astute, knowledgeable and increasingly effective, using their individual skills and expertise well while making sure they have the training to fulfil their roles.

- They use a range of information, including that from their visits, to check how the school is performing and hold school leaders to account.
- Governors have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and check that pay awards are merited by better performance. They support the school leaders in tackling weak teaching.
- Governors check spending closely, including extra funding such as pupil premium and the primary sports funding, to ensure best value. They have a clear strategic plan.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Some pupils, when given a choice, coast along and opt for easy work, from which they learn little.
- Boys' attitudes to reading and writing are not always good. When tasks do not inspire them to persevere with their learning, they show disinterest and disengagement.
- Pupils' behaviour towards others is good. Pupils look out for one another and check no one is lonely. Whether in the classroom or the playground, in lessons or at before- and after-school clubs, they know what is right and wrong and behave accordingly.
- Pupils' pride in their school is clear. They enjoy contributing and taking responsibility. They are proud, for example, of the part they played in devising the 'drop-off' arrangements at the start of the day, and the impact these arrangements are making on punctuality and safety.
- Attendance, which had been below average in recent years, is now improving in response to the school's successful efforts in engaging parents' support. Pupils and their parents recognise the importance of school and clear procedures are applied consistently.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The grounds are secure and well maintained. Visits are carefully assessed and potential risks managed well. Breakfast and after-school clubs provide a safe and secure start to the day for participants.
- The school checks the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils. All staff are fully trained and safeguarding is seen as paramount. Well-publicised notices and signs remind staff of their responsibilities.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They know the dangers of cyber-bullying and how to stay safe when using the internet because they have been trained well and receive regular reminders. Pupils spoken to were confident staff would resolve any worries they raised.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers' regular checks of what pupils already know, understand and can do are sometimes inaccurate, so tasks can be either too hard or too easy for some. This particularly affects the most-able pupils.
- The teaching of mathematics varies in quality and impact because the application of the school's clear and comprehensive learning policy for mathematics is not followed consistently, so that sometimes, pupils are confused.
- Teachers have a good understanding of technical vocabulary and use it correctly in their teaching, but they do not always check pupils understand the words themselves, or insist they use them to improve their answers or their subsequent writing.
- In some lessons, teachers do too much and pupils do too little. Teachers see any pupil struggling as a failing on their part, and quickly intervene. As a result, pupils do not sufficiently learn how to think for

themselves.

- The teaching of reading is not fully effective because teachers do not always involve and motivate boys in reading and writing. Boys' reticence is compounded because girls are highly motivated to answer. However, the choice of books is widening and this is beginning to interest boys more. The school's system for teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) is a strength.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive which helps learning to progress smoothly. Rare occurrences of poor behaviour are managed well.
- Pupils' books show recent improvement in the teaching of writing, following significant staff training in new approaches. This is not fully successful as some boys still see writing as a chore. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught effectively.
- Teaching assistants are fully trained in the additional programmes they run for pupils needing extra help. These are effective. As a result, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress.
- Teachers' marking in pupils' workbooks gives them the guidance they need to improve. Occasionally, teachers comment on attitudes, too, for example that the pupil has shown resilience. This, too, is beneficial for pupils and helping to improve their progress.
- Teachers use technology effectively, particularly to interest pupils and explain the main points of the learning. Pupils have good opportunities to use technology to aid them, especially in homework activities.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement in reading, writing and particularly, mathematics, requires improvement, because progress is too variable through the school to be rated good overall.
- In mathematics and in writing, pupils sometimes opt for too-easy work and this holds back progress. Progress is held back when teachers do not use the school's learning policies and pupils become confused.
- Boys' achievement in reading and writing fell behind in 2014 because writing tasks and reading materials sometimes did not interest or motivate them. The school has identified this weakness and has begun to improve boys' progress.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the nationally expected standard in the phonics check was broadly average. School information and inspection findings indicate pupils are on track to do a little better this year.
- In 2014, standards were above average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. This year, school information and inspection findings suggest pupils are on track to reach similar levels in reading and mathematics, although not so high in writing.
- In 2014, pupils in Year 6 attained slightly higher than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, their rate of progress in Key Stage 2 was similar to the national picture in writing and below in reading and mathematics. The proportion achieving above the expected rate of progress was below average in all three subjects. This year, school information and inspection findings indicate pupils in Year 6 overall are on track to make expected progress. Some pupils are on track to make better than expected progress.
- A higher-than-average proportion of the most-able pupils in Year 2 achieved the higher level (Level 3) in National Curriculum tests in 2014. In 2015, this is likely to be maintained.

- In Year 6, an average proportion achieved the progress expected of them but few achieved the highest Level 6. This is because the progress of some of the most-able pupils is limited by the lack of opportunities to deepen their learning and understanding, and because some tasks in lessons are not matched closely enough to their prior learning to challenge them sufficiently.
- Disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, make good progress from their various starting points. This improvement is because they are given strong support.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively and make good progress so that gaps in attainment are closing. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils attained standards that were ahead of the classmates and other pupils nationally by about two terms, in writing. In reading, they attained about the same as their classmates and others nationally, but in mathematics, they were behind their classmates and others nationally by almost a year.
- Pupils from ethnic minority groups, and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress. Their diligent attitudes and strong commitment to learning, coupled with the school's clear approach to tailoring teaching approaches to their needs, are key factors.
- Achievement is broadened and extended well by a very wide range of activities, including music and sports. Overall, most pupils are adequately prepared for secondary school.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement because, although children are given opportunities to choose what they do for themselves, staff often give them too much guidance about what to do and how to do it. As a result, children have too few opportunities to try things out for themselves, to test ideas through trial and error, or to think through a problem and find out more. They are consequently not developing good learning skills to prepare them fully for the next stage in their learning. However, when staff work directly with children, tasks are suitably challenging so children make good progress. Staff are good at drawing out children's ideas and thoughts, which helps them develop communication skills.
- Work to keep children safe and secure is good. Their welfare is of paramount importance to staff. Children are beginning to develop an awareness of their own safety and that of others. Children behave well towards one another. They want to please so they listen attentively, cooperate and follow instructions. They benefit from the good example set by the pupils in Year 1 who work alongside them.
- Children start Reception with a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding, broadly typical for their age. In 2014, an above-average proportion of girls reached a good level of development. However, although boys had made progress, their attainment was below average, especially in writing. This year, school information and inspection findings indicate that this has been addressed and a higher proportion of all children are on track to reach a good level of development.
- The leadership and management of the early years is improving. It requires further improvement because, in the past not enough has been done by leaders to ensure that teaching enables children to use their curiosity, imagination and resourcefulness to the full. The strength of leadership and management include the daily checking of children's progress and using the information to plan carefully for the following day. In addition, partnership with parents is strong. Parents particularly remark upon how quickly their children settle into Reception, find their feet and begin learning. A 'toddlers' club' gives helpful advice to parents and an interesting range of activities to children so they are well prepared for Reception. Transition into school is smooth.

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	124763
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	462035

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	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Davy
Headteacher	Maria Kemble (Executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2013
Telephone number	01787 373365
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