

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Pot Hall, Wilton Grove, Heywood OL10 2AA

Inspection dates

27–28 April 2016

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

- The headteacher's strong leadership ensures a clear vision to improve the school and promote learning. This is shared by her enthusiastic and committed staff and governors. Consequently, the quality of teaching, and pupils' outcomes, have rapidly improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve well in the school, particularly in reading. They make strong progress from their starting points and leave the school well prepared for their next stages of education.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and ensure a brisk pace to learning. Their regular and accurate assessments ensure that tasks nearly always build upon pupils' prior learning. Teachers constantly look for ways to improve pupils' learning.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Pupils are eager to excel; they concentrate in lessons and act maturely in positions of responsibility.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise the improvements made to the quality of their children's education. They say their children enjoy school and feel safe.
- Governors know the school well because they receive good-quality information from leaders. They ask probing questions and complete a wide range of checks through which they hold leaders to account.
- Focused leadership and effective teaching in the early years ensure children get a good start in school and are prepared well for their next stage of education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Senior leaders have not fully developed the skills of middle leaders who are new to the school or to their posts of responsibility.
- Teachers do not always deploy teaching assistants as effectively as possible. The skills and knowledge of teaching assistants are not always fully developed to support pupils' learning.
- Teachers' feedback is not always effective in improving pupils' learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, is not as strong as that of their peers in school or other pupils nationally.
- Outdoor learning in the early years is not of as high quality as indoor learning. There is some inconsistency of practice between classes in the early years.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - continuing to develop the skills of middle leaders who are new to their roles.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in school to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - developing the skills and knowledge of teaching assistants and focusing their deployment more sharply
 - ensuring that teachers' feedback to pupils is effective in improving their learning.
- Improve the quality of the early years by:
 - clarifying expectations about the recording of pupils' evidence of progress and ensuring that these expectations are consistently followed
 - continuing to improve the focused use of the outdoors to promote learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The strong leadership of the headteacher is a driving force for rapid and sustained improvement in the school. She has a clear vision and high expectations of herself and her staff to provide the best education for pupils. Senior leaders have a dogged determination and commitment to ensure that this vision is realised in the teaching pupils receive. Their enthusiasm and thirst for improvement has led to a highly motivated staff and rapid improvement in the outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders' rigorous and robust monitoring of the quality of teaching ensures they have a deep and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. School development planning is detailed and closely focused on appropriate priorities. It is regularly reviewed, updated and shared with governors.
- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum that is enriched by additional opportunities that allow pupils to develop their interests in sport, creative pursuits and academic study. For example, there are sporting clubs such as karate and football, while mathematics booster, puzzle and drama clubs stimulate pupils' academic and theatrical interests. The promotion of equality and fundamental British values is effective and threaded throughout the curriculum: pupils' participation in elections for school councillors develops their understanding of democracy.
- Through effective use of the pupil premium, leaders enable disadvantaged pupils to participate in educational visits and extra-curricular activities. Additional support for disadvantaged pupils in core subjects is managed well and has led to the closing of achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils in school and other pupils nationally.
- School leaders' effective use of the additional sport funding grant both provides expert tuition for pupils and develops teachers' skills. A specialist coach is employed by the school to help deliver and support the physical education curriculum. Work with two local sports partnerships has increased the school's access to a wide range of sports competitions, and provided safety training for the use of bicycles on the road. Pupils' participation in sport has increased.
- Leaders communicate regularly and effectively with parents. Most parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A very small minority of parents expressed some concerns over aspects of the school, including how leaders deal with allegations of bullying. However, inspectors found no evidence to substantiate these claims during the inspection.
- This is a welcoming school where pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is developed well and threaded through all that they do. Core values, including respect for other faiths, cultures and lifestyles underpin the school's ethos. Leaders develop pupils' understanding of the variety of cultures in modern Britain, including through visits to other places of worship and links with other schools.
- Leaders and governors are vigilant and proactive in ensuring all staff are effectively trained to keep pupils safe from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.
- The leadership of reading and writing is strong. Some middle leaders have a more limited understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects because they are new to their roles and have not fully developed their skills in monitoring and evaluation. Senior leaders are taking appropriate actions to support them to become stronger leaders. Links between middle leaders and governors are well defined and effective. Some middle leaders have presented at governing body meetings. They provide regular written reports to ensure that governors are well informed about the impact of actions to improve subjects.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance of the school is strong. Governors share the ambition for excellence with the school's leaders and staff. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the effectiveness of the school because they visit often and receive high-quality information from a variety of sources. They ask probing and challenging questions of the school's leaders and of external quality assurance professionals.
 - Governors are involved in developing and rigorously monitoring the school's improvement plans and actions. They monitor the school's finances closely and evaluate the impact of the pupil premium grant and additional funding for physical education.
 - Governors have detailed knowledge of the school's performance management systems and ensure they are rigorously and effectively implemented. Detailed reporting by senior leaders ensures governors are well informed about the priorities for staff development and have a secure understanding of the links between performance management and pay.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
 - The governing body ensures that the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding, including through its robust systems to check the suitability of all adults who work in the school.
 - Leaders implement and monitor the school’s safeguarding policies with rigour. Checks are thorough and compete; all records relating to safeguarding are kept meticulously. Any concerns regarding the safety or welfare of children are acted upon rigorously.
 - Well-trained staff deal appropriately with child protection concerns and are constantly vigilant.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers’ high expectations and secure subject knowledge have raised pupils’ expectations and achievement, particularly in writing. Teachers ensure that, from a young age, pupils understand and enjoy writing. They learn about how writing works. For example, pupils in Year 1 were confident to explain how they were constructing instructional sentences with imperative verbs for the ‘jolly postman’. They showed a secure level of understanding when they explained with ease the importance of the time connective to give the correct order to their writing.
- Mathematics and writing are taught systematically so that pupils’ knowledge develops effectively over time and they reach levels of attainment that are at least expected for their age.
- Teachers use probing questions effectively to engage pupils in their learning and deepen their understanding. This was shown in key stage 2 where a teacher asked pupils to give their reasons why they thought he had chosen to teach fractions and percentages together in a single lesson. He used the pupils’ answers to introduce effective strategies to solve complex problems about percentages.
- The effective teaching of reading is a strength of the school and is shown in pupils’ love of books. Pupils are confident readers in key stage 1 and by the time they leave the school their reading skills are excellent. Pupils recognise the importance of being able to read. They know that teachers have high expectations and choose challenging books to help them improve their reading. One pupil in key stage 2 stated that the ‘guided reading has helped me read books I would not normally have chosen and I like this’, while another said, ‘My daily reading has helped me. I like to be challenged ...it helps me with new vocabulary.’
- Teachers use homework effectively to consolidate learning and allow pupils to practise their skills.
- Teachers closely follow the school’s marking and feedback policy and pupils welcome their comments. One pupil stated that it was good when the teacher challenged them to explain their answers because it helped them learn more. Sometimes feedback is not as effective in guiding pupils. School leaders are taking action to ensure that feedback is of consistently good quality.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively across the school to support pupils’ learning in a variety of situations. There is, however, variability in the level of skills that teaching assistants have in different subjects. This is not always considered during teachers’ planning and so assistants are not always deployed in ways that make best use of their strengths and have most impact on pupils’ learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school and what it provides for them. The overwhelming majority of parents share this pride.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and look after themselves because of the high-quality teaching they receive. They speak confidently about staying safe while online and how they would keep safe within and beyond their local community. Pupils’ knowledge has been enhanced by visits to the school from representatives of the NSPCC and local firefighters.
- Pupils, particularly those in key stage 2, show maturity when they undertake roles of responsibility such as school councillors or librarians. The school council has instigated a number of improvements to the school. School councillors have, for instance, written letters to parents asking them to stop smoking in the vicinity of the school because of the health dangers this poses to passing children.
- The nurturing ethos of the school is shown in pupils’ behaviour towards each other. Older pupils act as play leaders and look after younger siblings and friends during playtimes and lunchtimes, while older

pupils have the opportunity to join the school's chaplaincy team and provide pastoral support for their peers.

- The personal development and welfare of pupils who are vulnerable is well supported through the school's 'rainbow group', which offers effective pastoral and social support in times of need such as bereavement or family crisis.
- The school has good relationships with outside agencies and is proactive in referring any concerns that may place children at risk of harm and following up actions to ensure pupils remain safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct around the school and in lessons is exemplary. Pupils are impeccably polite, courteous and welcoming to staff, each other and visitors. They willingly engage in conversation and are keen to share what they have been learning.
- In lessons, pupils are extremely attentive and engaged in their tasks. They work collaboratively with maturity from an early age because of the well-established routines and demonstrate a thirst for knowledge and desire to learn. Pupils look to their teachers for inspiration and guidance.
- Pupils have a secure knowledge of what constitutes bullying and say that it rarely happens. They are confident that teachers will deal with issues quickly and effectively.
- Staff recognise the efforts of pupils and successfully encourage commitment to learning through the effective use of rewards. Reading challenge awards are very popular with pupils, who love to earn badges for reading different books and show off their prowess by wearing them prominently on their uniforms.
- Leaders recognise the importance of school attendance in ensuring pupils' future success. The appointment of a pastoral support officer through the pupil premium grant reflects the importance the school places on the need for pupils to attend school to learn. The officer rigorously monitors pupils' attendance and provides support and challenge wherever it is needed. As a result, attendance overall is above the national figure. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved rapidly.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The outcomes for pupils have improved significantly since the last inspection and have been sustained for the last two years.
- In 2015, the proportions of pupils achieving the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics were high. The proportions of pupils reaching the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics were similar to the national figures. Pupils made rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils did not achieve quite as well as other pupils in school and their progress in mathematics was not as strong as it was in reading and writing. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in school was better than that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- The work in books of pupils currently in school shows that in key stages 1 and 2 this improvement has been sustained. Good-quality teaching ensures pupils make good progress, particularly in writing. Consequently, higher proportions of pupils in key stage 1 now achieve at least what is expected for their age. Work in pupils' books in key stage 2 shows a strong improvement in mathematics. Consequently, pupils are making good progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils in school continue to make good progress and are closing the gap with their peers in school.
- Achievement in key stage 1 is improving because of the better quality of teaching pupils now receive.
- The most-able pupils in all year groups receive appropriate levels of challenge in the work set for them. Consequently, they make good progress from their starting points and reach levels of attainment at least in line with those that are expected for their age.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress in all subjects from their starting points, because they are well supported in school through a variety of effective strategies.
- Pupils make good progress in phonics (letters and the sounds they make). The proportion of pupils who reach the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check has improved rapidly. It has been above the national average for the last two years and shows an improving trend. Disadvantaged pupils performed slightly less well than their peers did in 2015 but similarly to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Early years provision

is good

- Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of early years because of their careful monitoring and analysis. Their improvement plans identify appropriate priorities and how these will be achieved.
- Teachers' assessment in the early years is accurate and is regularly checked by senior leaders. The school's systems ensure leaders have an accurate understanding of the progress individual children make. There is, however, a lack of consistency between classes in the recording of evidence of children's learning.
- The majority of children enter the school with levels of development below those which are typical for their age. They make good progress from their starting points because of the high-quality teaching they receive. Consequently, the proportions of children reaching a good level of development has improved rapidly and is now above the national figure. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. Children are well prepared for key stage 1 when they leave the Reception class.
- Staff have excellent knowledge of up-to-date early years practice. Children's safety and welfare are ensured because leaders and staff are well trained and highly vigilant.
- High-quality teaching of phonics helps to develop children's language skills quickly and prepares them well for writing.
- Children are inquisitive and enthusiastic learners who collaborate and play well together because teaching nurtures their interests and provides activities that seize their attention. For example, teachers used children's own ideas to develop a topic about dinosaurs while activities based on a famous television talent contest developed children's confidence and communications skills.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. Teachers and teaching assistants have positive relationships with parents. Regular contact with home is kept through letters, texts and parents' meetings. Parents are welcomed into school to discuss any issues.
- The use of the outdoors to promote learning is not as effective as the use of indoor activities. Outdoor activities, when they occur, are exciting but do not consistently build upon children's learning.

School details

Unique reference number	105833
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10012167

This inspection 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	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adriano Nacca
Headteacher	Caroline Dunne
Telephone number	01706 369 340
Website	http://www.stjosephsrcprimary.rochdale.sch.uk/
Email address	head@stjosephsrcprimary.rochdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 May 2014

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets the requirements for publishing information on its website.
- The school operates a before- and after-school care facility for pupils from the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a range of lessons or parts of lessons and looked at pupils' work. They listened to pupils reading, and talked with pupils about their lessons and school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, the local authority's school improvement adviser linked to the school, and a representative of the Salford Diocese.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and to school management, including the arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The inspectors spoke with parents and staff and took account of the 43 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the pupils' and staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Julie Downing	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Parkinson	Ofsted Inspector

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